



THE FIJI COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND INC.

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Secretary: Ms Irene Tavutavu

April 8th 2023

Dear Committee Secretary

Re: Migration Amendment (Australian's Engagement in the Pacific and other measures) Bill 2023, and the Migration (Visa Pre-application Process) Charge Bill 2023.

Fiji Community Association of Queensland Inc. Submission.

I am Dr Vilaseri Tuicolo, President of this Incorporated Community Association, write this submission on behalf of my Association.

We have been in existence since the 1970's and became incorporated in 1989. Our members are all former Fiji Residents, born and brought up in Fiji or were of foreign births, domiciled in Fiji for part of their lives and have migrated to Australia, and settled in Queensland. Our community in Queensland is the biggest of any Fijian community in the country.

We have always prided ourselves in that our migration to Australia have always been on merit, not dependent on entry by way of another country or being sponsored. Migration to Australia from Fiji is growing and up to the last census over 420,000 Fijians now call Australia their permanent home. Fijian people migrate because they have deep familial or personal reasons to relocate. For some it's about lifelong dreams, for others about space and quality of life, for others still, reuniting with their family or returning to places they have been students and/or grown up some years before: Permanent Residency visas, Student visas, Working Holiday visas, Long Term or Temporary work visas and family reunion visas; additionally, other migrate to Australia to setup a new business, grow their existing one, or to invest in the future of their children. Of late, 51% of visas are "skilled work" visas.

The Fiji Community Association of Queensland, is concerned about the proposed Bill and the underlying visa in three ways:

1. The idea that Fijians will be asked to pay for the chance to access a visa where they have no capacity to influence the outcome of whether they are successful.
2. The lottery concept itself and the lack of merit-based criteria in the visa.
3. The concept of mixing the Pacific nations together without considering how this will impact the end outcome.

Lottery concept.

As Fijians, we primarily migrate to Australia directly from Fiji. Unlike many from countries such as Samoa, Tonga, Niue, and the Cook Islands, we do not migrate to Australia through a country such as New Zealand. As many of our Fijian families have community back in Fiji, we are concerned about how rejections multiple times through a lottery concept will impact the members of our community. The instability that a lottery causes is something that appears to have been overlooked.

We also find the basic tenant of the lottery to be one that shows a disrespect to our people. Our community will always thrive when we are given the chance to meet a standard set. A lottery removes that concept and leaves it to pure luck. This lack of criteria reduces the value of our community inside the migration system. We thrive and delight on merit-based visas.

Mixing the nations

Under the proposal, applicants from the below nations will be mixed in together for the purposes of the same visa: "Eligible countries could include Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.". There is an obvious disparity in population density right across the different nations.

Our Position

How will the Australian Government make sure that iTaukei Fijians as well as Indo-Fijians will get visas?

How can the government ensure that some very small nations with fewer names in the "lottery hat" will get visas and not get drowned out?

We would think it would be better to portion out the visas to ensure the smaller nations are protected against the weight of numbers.

Furthermore, we pay a pre-application fee to apply for participation (lottery), not knowing whether our name is ever going to be drawn. Will there be another fee required once we are drawn to participate in the visa application?

Thank you for your time to take notice of our concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Vilaseri L Tuicolo, FRCOG; FRANZCOG.
President, FCAQ Inc