

I am a registered migration agent who completed my basic training in 2011, and since completed a master's degree in migration law.

I am a single early 60s migration agent, working 17 hrs a day, most days of the week.

The Migration Amendment (Regulation of Migration Agents) Bill 2017 is unfair and may be a long-term plan to abolish my profession.

The purpose of my email to you is to make a submission in response to the Senate Inquiry into the Bill (Friday 1/9/2017).

My submission will argue why this bill threatens my profession and how it will impact the Department of Immigration and cost the department in financial terms.

Impact on the Department of Immigration

Migration agents are trained in migration law so it is reasonable to state the visa applications they submit should be more complete.

If an application is incomplete and a case officer has to request more information, or respond with a lengthy refusal, it takes time. Time is money.

It is common knowledge that DIBP has resource issues, has cut staff and are outsourcing some processes.

If a request for more information is done, the application goes back into the queue to be attended to by another case officer, who has to spend more time assessing the case, then request more info, or do the lengthy refusal letter.

This has a huge impact on human resources and of course cost the DIBP.

By reintroducing decision-ready declarations, should significantly reduce the time a case officer has to invest in a case.

By forcing offshore applicants to only work through a registered migration agency, will further cut the expense to the DIBP.

To abolish our profession, will cost the DIBP as offshore non-regulated migration agents will surely abuse this gap, and the DIBP will have to deal with unqualified agents or uninformed visa applicants. If we are removed from the scenario, the DIBP will have to deal with the visa applicant's questions. This will probably result in the current 2 hr call being 4 hrs waiting until someone will answer the call. DIBP will need to employ more staff, or Australia as a fair go country, a preferred destination to visit and migrate to, will lose its 'accreditation' in the global market.

This in turn will hurt businesses in Australia.

Migration agents do not only deal with migrants, but also visitor visas.

Changes can be made to have better working relationship with migration agents, which in turn will reduce the workload of DIBP. It is a win-win.

The proposed Bill will be a loose-loose situation for the DIBP, migrants, and migration agents, with a flow on effect on businesses.

Impact on the migration agent community

Until I became a migration agent, I thought I was a hard worker. Being an agent is all consuming; I have never worked this hard. If it is my son's birthday dinner and I have an emergency or deadline, my case takes precedence.

As a migration agent, I have invested everything I have (time, money, relationships, health, etc.) in my job. I do this willingly as I am passionate about my job.

My agent network consists of almost 300 agents, and we all make the same statement -the level of stress is enormous.

We are caught between the DIBP and the client. Sometimes unfair decisions are made " we may have lodged 3 identical applications, two are granted, and the 3rd refused. We have to explain this inconsistency to our client.

So we lodge again, we carry the cost as we cannot explain the inconsistency and feel our clients cannot be penalised for this.

My work as migration agent, feeds about 10 Australian families.

As a 61 yr old, I cannot re-invent myself at this age, so will have to look at Centrelink to help me financially - a further cost to the government.

Currently we are seeing contracts falling over as the recent changes to skilled migration came without warning, we are dealing with traumatised migrants who now have to leave Australia.

We cannot tell anyone what will happen to their undecided application on 1/3/18 - I attended every roadshow, every meeting re the changes, sometimes taking a whole day from my office to take 2 flights to attend such a meeting, just to ask 2 critical questions.

I yet have to receive answers to my 2 questions.

Yet I return to my office, and will put in another 17 hr day.

With the recent changes to skilled migration and the citizenship act, we heard about it on the national news. We were not consulted, in spite of being assured by a Senator [Fierravanti-Wells, Senator the Hon Concetta Anna](#)

Minister for International Development and the Pacific, at a recent Sydney conference, that as Migration agents we are important, are valued, that we play a pivotal role in migration.

Was she lying? Was she placating? I hope note!

Certainly being snubbed in relation to the recent changes, and our questions not being properly addressed, speak volumes and contradict Senator Fierravanti-Well's statement to us.

The some 6000 registered agents in Australia are all affected by this proposed Bill, we have all been affected by the recent surprise changes.

In summary, I think the Bill is unfair, is short-sighted and should not pass the Senate. It has far reaching consequences for our profession and for the DIBP.

I urge you to oppose this Bill.

Thanks for taking the time to read my submission.

Johanna Barnard (Joey)

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Master of Migration Law & Practice (MML&P); BCouns; GCCW; GCML&P; GCProfLegalStudies (Incomplete).

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Mara registration <https://www.mara.gov.au/search-the-register-of-migration-agents/registered-migration-agent-details/?id=a59d4a61-a452-e311-9402-005056ab0eca>

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