

I am writing with reference to the proposed changes outlined in the Visa Capping Bill introduced recently. This bill, if passed, is going to affect the former and present students as well as their families primarily, who have waited a long time in anticipation of realisation of their dreams. The way, in which the immigration department has indicated will act, gives a shattering blow to the dreams of people who have hoped to make Australia home. These people are mostly the students who have studied and worked in Australia and are still working. Most of them have spent huge amounts of money in terms of tuition fees, living expenses, and immigrations charges. However, the mentioned costs are just the monetary ones and other costs in terms of people's emotions are enormous of which the Immigration department is largely unaware and unsympathetic about.

The minister says that proposed changes are to help improve the Australian economy and markets. The presence of students in this country is in no way a hindrance to that goal. The students in question work hard providing cheap labour and services to the Australian employers and do jobs, which their Australian counterparts are unwilling to do either because of the hard jobs or lower wages. They pay taxes to the government generating revenue and do not claim any benefits like the bogus refugees that prove to be a burden on the state. They are most of the time highly educated and have got a great potential to serve the country if given right opportunities. But unfortunately they are treated unfairly and face discrimination at the hands of employers and a handful of ignorant people in the society, who attack them racially sometimes.

The minister is right in saying that many of the people who have lodged their GSM applications, are not working in their nominated trades. First of all, it is not easy for a student on a bridging visa to secure a full-time employment in their chosen field as the employers prefer permanent residents. The students go for other jobs, which the Australians might not like doing because either the jobs are low paid or there is less safety involved. It is hard to imagine that these students are not contributing to the economy.

The students lodged their valid applications under the GSM programme according to the law prevailing at that time. The decision to move to another country is a big one and involves not just a great amount of money but a great deal of time. The plan of the minister to compensate the applicant with the visa fee (in case of visa capping) just amounts to making a mockery of the very serious business. Such a decision would very seriously undermine the government's credibility and their promise to act fairly. The immigration department should not have let the applicants to make an application in the first place if they wanted a certain number of applications. It shows a policy failure on part of the government and the innocent and law abiding people should not be punished for that.

I am in complete agreement with many of the submissions already given by other participants, like one of them anticipates a serious problem of illegal immigration in case of visa capping because many of the failed applicants might not just leave the country. The employers who have employed former students will suffer too as they will struggle to find new staff. Future students and immigrants would look at the Australian immigration system as an unfair, unreliable and unjustified one.

The government must look at these matters seriously and not rush to make rules which might do discredit to the image of the country worldwide. The problems of backlog of applications have other solutions, which could be applied. Assigning more case workers to complete the cases in the one. Australia is a country made of immigrant people if we look at the history and all these people have contributed to the national progress and advancement. Any policies, which show a serious immigration bias or prejudice, will not be in conformity with constitutional promises to treat all people equally regardless of differences.

