



Call for public comment on Australia's migration health rules

Do visa applicants with a disability represent an unfair cost to the Australian community and to our health system? This is the question being asked by the Migration Committee's inquiry into the migration treatment of disability.

Chair Michael Danby said that the Committee would like to hear the views of people with a disability, employers, business organisations, disability and community services providers, and any other interested individuals or organisations.

The Committee is also interested in hearing the stories of people who have had difficulties getting a visa due to a disability, disease or condition, or have a friend or family member with that experience.

Comments are sought on the following questions:

- Is the current process for assessing a visa applicant against the health requirement fair and transparent?
- What types of contributions and costs should be considered?
- How do we measure these?
- Are there additional factors that should be considered?
- Do you have personal experience of this?
- What principles should apply to the assessment of visa applications against the health requirement? Should there be exceptions?

Every year, millions of people apply to visit or migrate to Australia, and grant of a visa is conditional on a person satisfying the health requirement specified in the Migration Regulations.

Disability does not in itself mean that a person or a family will be refused a visa. However, as part of the health test, applicants with a 'disease or condition' are assessed on their potential cost and impact on Australian health and community services.

In 2007-08, at least 240 people were refused visas on the basis of a health condition, including at least 70 with a disability. An additional 442 applicants were refused a visa on health grounds because they had a family member who was unable to meet the health requirement.

The Committee is examining whether decision-makers should be able to take into account a potential migrant's social and economic contribution as well as anticipated health care costs. For full details of the terms of reference and information on how to make a submission, please visit the Committee website.

The Committee will be holding public hearings for the inquiry on Thursday 12 November in Sydney and Tuesday 1 December in Melbourne. Further dates are also planned for Brisbane and Canberra. People and organisations interested in participating in a public hearing should contact the secretariat.

For media comment, please contact the Committee Chair, Michael Danby MP, on (02) 6277 4520, or the Deputy Chair, Hon Danna Vale MP, on (02) 6277 4866.

For more information and the inquiry terms of reference, visit the inquiry website at www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/mig/disability/index.htm or contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4560 or jscm@aph.gov.au.