



Health exemptions for skilled visas? Department of Immigration and Citizenship to speak on disability and migration

In Canberra on Wednesday 24 February 2010 the Joint Standing Committee on Migration will hear from the Federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) about the administration of the *Migration Act 1958 (Cth)* and its impact on people with a disability seeking to migrate to Australia.

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. The health requirement is designed to protect Australia from public health risks, contain public expenditure on health and community services, and maintain access of Australian residents to those services. 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 the potential cost and impact on Australian health and community services.

The inquiry is examining whether visa decision-makers should be able to take into account the social and economic contribution, as well as the anticipated health care costs, of potential migrants with disabilities.

DIAC has expressed support for the view that economic benefits provided by some applicants should be given more weight in visa processing. It has proposed that a number of skilled/business visa subclasses should qualify for a 'health waiver'.

Migration Committee Chair Michael Danby stated: 'Many migration applicants go through lengthy and costly processes to fulfill the required health assessments, and then are refused a visa. Often those assessments do not take into account what we as a nation may gain from skilled migrants, or how a person with a disability may positively contribute to Australian society both economically and socially.'

Mr Danby said, 'The Committee is particularly interested to hear how medical assessments are conducted and how benefits to the Australian community, not just potential costs, are considered when granting health waivers'.

**Public hearing program:
12.00pm, Wednesday 24 February 2010
Committee Room 1R3 Parliament House
Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Submission 66)**

Visitors are welcome to attend or listen to a live webcast at

<http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>.

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.