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BY: mig 

CARERS' VISA

A SUBMISSION FROM A PARENT ON HER SON'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF LIVING WITH A DISABILITY FROM A MIGRANT BACKGROUND:

- The carers' visa is a visa category that could potentially be of great benefit to a person with a profound and permanent disability as well as the Australian Community.
- A detailed cost- benefit analysis of this visa category should reveal great economic and social advantages to be gained by reviewing its accessibility.
- As a young man living in Australia from birth, my son faces not only the disadvantage of having a severe and permanent disability (autism, non verbal), but of being isolated in terms of family networks and social networks. Family networks are lacking as he is of migrant background. He has no other family besides his mother and his father who lives away from him due to the divorce of his parents. His disability isolates him and he is unable to form friendships.
- The carers' visa has the potential to offer him an opportunity to have a lifetime companion and carer who would have the skills and knowledge to meet his needs. This would be so because, unlike paid workers, the kinship carer would be performing the caring role for a two year period of time and most likely remain associated with him over his lifespan.
- As a person of South Asian background who is the carer of a young adult (son) with a severe permanent disability (who has 'high support needs' I am constantly challenged by the lack of resources both personal and community in caring for my son in a manner appropriate to his needs and my needs both health, social and fiscal.
- I have looked at the eligibility criteria for this visa category and find that they are extremely restrictive rendering this very limited in its usefulness.
- The carer visa requires the person being sponsored to be an immediate relative of the sponsor (namely, the person with the disability). It does allow for step families to be eligible for sponsorship as they are viewed as being members of the immediate family. But it does not enable extended family such as cousins and aunts to be sponsored on this visa.
- I would like to make the following point in relation to this visa:
- The categories of kin able to be sponsored under this visa are discriminatory in terms of kinship practices and family relationships as they are experienced by persons of multicultural background. While many Asian communities including South Asian communities have large extended networks that are significant in the contribution they make to family life, they are not able to bring those relatives to care for their family member in Australia.

- This deprives both the person with disability and the Australian community of carers who could make a lasting difference to the quality of care that the person with disability enjoys. It could also enable the Australian community to take advantage of family networks as they exist among migrants both first generation and second generation that can provide the support and care that would delay or permanently reduce the dependence on services that are much more expensive. I refer to the difference in cost in offering accommodation support in the family home as compared to the cost of providing for public accommodation with support services.
- I would propose that the eligibility criteria in terms of what categories of relatives can be sponsored under the carer visa be expanded to include relatives outside the immediate family.
- The eligibility could be tested in a more open ended and discretionary way than is currently provided under this visa class.
- If you asked my son, he would laboriously spell out that he is 'very lonely and would love to have another caring person, a family member, to be part of his life'.

For further information please contact Rajni Chandran on 02 98697166.

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to the discussions on Migration and Disability.