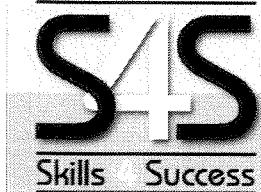


Submission No 22

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27 OCT 2009
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Behaviour Strategies that Work!

26th October 2009

Committee Secretary
Migration Treatment of People with a Disability Review
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Re: Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Inquiry into immigration
treatment of disability

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this review. I believe it will be a very welcome inquiry for the many families who have been affected by the health test as it stands in it's current form.

Until April this year I was the Information and Support Services Coordinator for the Down Syndrome Association of Queensland. In the nine years of my appointment in this position, I had contact with many families who have been adversely affected by the discriminatory nature of the health test.

Down syndrome is not a disease, however, there seems to be an inbuilt assumption, that if some-one has Down syndrome or other disabilities there will automatically be health issues and associated costs to Australia to help support this person. This is not the case. While some people with Down syndrome and other disabilities may have some health concerns, many do not.

Most of the families that I had contact with, had children with Down syndrome who had no health issues at all, but were still denied residency under the health test. This seems to be directly at odds with the statement:

"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."

Many of the families already had other extended family members living here who had previously been granted residency.

Most of the families had no need of Government support in their country of origin, however, it was automatically assumed that just because their child had Down syndrome, support would be needed here in Australia.

Most of these families had the means to finance private services if any extra support was needed.

Most of these families 'gave up' after reams of paperwork and months and months of visiting Doctors and providing reports.

Most importantly, these families (including their children with a disability) had the capacity to make a contribution to Australia, both socially and economically.

The most concerning issue in the health test, is the underlying, hidden message that supports discrimination against people with a disability. It is assumed that if you have a disability you will be a drain on the rest of society and you not able to make a contribution.

Changes need to be made to the Migration Act to bring it in line with the Disability Discrimination Act.

"Ability matters – but here's the catch- so does diversity....ability and diversity complement one another" – Scott E Page

Yours sincerely,

Kerri Inglis

Helping people with an Intellectual disability have a GOOD life!