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

Submission No 53

Dear Committee Secretary,

Multicultural Mental Health Australia is the national program focusing on multicultural mental health and suicide prevention, funded under the National Mental Health Strategy and National Suicide Prevention Strategy by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. MMHA provides national leadership in mental health and suicide prevention for Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds and works to promote better mental health and well-being for a diverse community.

MMHA welcomes the review of the Migration Treatment of People with a Disability by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration. We support reform of migration laws and processes to prevent discrimination against refugees and migrants with a disability and their families, particularly those who have had hospital admissions for a psychiatric condition or have had extensive treatment for depression and anxiety.

This review is timely given the recent reforms that have occurred in the mental health sector across Australia. Of particular note is the addition of a recovery standard within the draft National Standards for Mental Health Services. The inclusion of this standard is an acknowledgement of current thinking in Australia that people affected by mental illness can, with the appropriate supports, recover and make a valuable social and economic contribution that far outweighs the costs of their recovery process.

The current health test means that migrants and refugees with a disability are routinely refused entry to Australia as a result of an assessment of the potential health costs associated with their illness or a disability. This does not take into account the future social and economic contributions that people affected by mental illness can make. It also means that many families supporting people with a disability make a difficult decision to leave behind a valued family member in order to build a life in Australia.

In cases involving humanitarian entrants, these family members with a disability will remain in extremely vulnerable situations. The current laws are discriminatory to people with a disability, and disregard the valuable contributions that are made to Australia by all people with a disability and their families.

The current Joints Standing Committee Review into the Immigration Treatment of Disability offers an opportunity for positive reform and we call for the application of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* to the *Migration Act 1958*.

I trust that you will favourably consider this proposal, and work to secure rights and participation for all people with a disability.

Please feel free to contact me via phone on 02 9840 333 or email at Georgia.Zogalis@swahs.health.nsw.gov.au

Yours sincerely



Georgia Zogalis
National Program Manager