

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

1.1 On 1 March 2007 the Senate referred to the Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs the provisions of the Migration Amendment (Maritime Crew) Bill 2007 (the Bill), for inquiry and report by 20 April 2007.

1.2 The Bill proposes to amend the *Migration Act 1958* to create a new class of temporary visa, the maritime crew visa. The maritime crew visa will replace special purpose and other visas which are currently granted by operation of law to foreign crew of non-military ships, foreign crew of ships being imported into Australia, foreign supernumerary crew and the spouses and dependent children accompanying such crew.<sup>1</sup>

1.3 The Explanatory Memorandum (EM) sets out that, unlike the current system, the grant of a maritime crew visa will require a formal application by foreign crew members and their families:

Currently foreign crew and their families are not required to make a formal application for a visa before coming to Australia. The grant of a maritime crew visa will require a formal application to be made, which will allow each foreign crew member and the spouses and dependent children of such crew, to be subjected to an appropriate level of security checking before visa grant.<sup>2</sup>

1.4 In the second reading speech for the Bill, the Hon. Kevin Andrews, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship (the Minister), stated: '[t]hese statutory reforms are needed to strengthen the integrity of Australia's borders...The application process for the new visa will enable crew to be appropriately security cleared before they enter Australia'.<sup>3</sup>

### Conduct of the inquiry

1.5 The committee advertised the inquiry in *The Australian* newspaper on 21 March 2007, and invited submissions by 23 March 2007. Details of the inquiry, the Bill, and associated documents were placed on the committee's website. The committee also wrote to over 40 organisations and individuals informing them of the inquiry.

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1 EM, paragraph 2.

2 EM, paragraph 3.

3 *House of Representatives Hansard*, 15 February 2007, p. 4.

1.6 The committee received 6 submissions which are listed at Appendix 1. Submissions were placed on the committee's website for ease of access by the public.

1.7 The committee held a public hearing in Canberra on 29 March 2007. A list of witnesses who appeared at the hearing is at Appendix 2 and copies of the Hansard transcript are available through the Internet at <http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/index.htm>.

### **Acknowledgement**

1.8 The committee thanks those organisations and individuals who made submissions and gave evidence at the public hearing.

### **Note on references**

1.9 References in this report are to individual submissions as received by the committee, not to a bound volume. References to the committee Hansard are to the proof Hansard: page numbers may vary between the proof and the official Hansard transcript.