



Putting a price on disability: Australia's migration health rules

The Joint Standing Committee on Migration will hear tomorrow from Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, who argue that the health requirement that currently applies to Australian visas reflects an outdated view of disability and of the public interest.

Migration Committee Chair, Michael Danby, said that the public hearing is part of the Committee's current inquiry into the migration treatment of disability. "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 their potential cost and impact on Australian health and community services".

"The Committee is examining whether decision-makers should be able to take into account a potential migrant's social and economic contribution as well as anticipated costs", Mr Danby said.

In a discussion paper published earlier this year, Australian Lawyers for Human Rights suggested that the migration system needs to take a broader view of the value of a potential migrant and their family.

Australia should consider "a shift from an objective economic assessment of a disabled person's value... to one with a greater focus on their value and contributions to a diverse and progressive society", it said.

"Some values cannot be expressed in economic terms, such as the quality of a person's life, relationships and their contribution to Australian society."

This would be in line with the social model of disability adopted in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with a Disability, which was ratified by Australia last year, as well as the social inclusion agenda being promoted through the development of a National Disability Strategy.

While the formal submission period has closed, the Committee will continue to accept submissions and encourages people with a disability, employers, business organisations, disability and community services providers, and any other interested individuals or organisations to make comment.

The public hearing will commence at 12.30 pm in Committee Room 1R3, Parliament House, Canberra. Visitors are welcome to attend, or you can 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.