

Australian Citizenship Legislation Amendment (Strengthening the Commitments for Australian Citizenship and Other Measures) Bill 2018

Anglicare Sydney Submission to the Senate Inquiry



April 2018

1. Anglicare Sydney

1.1 Anglicare Diocese of Sydney (Anglicare Sydney) is an organisation of the Anglican Church and one of the largest Christian community service organisations in Australia. We operate a wide range of community and aged care programs across the Sydney Metropolitan, Illawarra and Shoalhaven regions of New South Wales. Our 3,900 staff and more than 3,000 volunteers operate across a diverse range of community services, including services for migrants, refugees, and people seeking asylum. We further support and build the capacity of the Anglican Parishes across our region to welcome and assist new arrivals in their community.

2. Citizenship Bill

2.1 Anglicare Sydney notes that the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee intends to consider submissions made to the Senate Inquiry in 2017 regarding the previous iteration of this bill. We made a submission to the Senate in July 2017 and **rely on the content of that submission for your consideration**, as our position on the proposed amendments remains unchanged.

2.2 Essentially, we support in principle governmental and community efforts to strengthen the integrity of Australian citizenship and further promote an inclusive understanding of citizenship as a 'common bond', founded on shared values, rights and responsibilities and encourage expression of these values in everyday life. However, we do not support measures that will have the effect of unfairly discriminating between cohorts within Australia's migrant and refugee population, by screening prospective citizens on criteria that do not accurately assess their commitment to Australia and its people.

2.3 We believe that increasing the general residence requirement and the English language threshold will adversely impact new Australians who have arrived from refugee, humanitarian and non-skilled family visa backgrounds, and make it significantly harder for these people to be afforded the security and privilege of attaining Australian citizenship.

2.4 Anglicare Sydney staff provided evidence to the 2017 Inquiry at the Sydney hearing. We would be willing to support the Committee with any further information it requires to assist in understanding the kinds of individuals, families and communities that would be negatively impacted by the significant changes proposed in this bill.

Anglicare Sydney appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the Senate's Inquiry into this very important issue.

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