

To whom this may concern,

I am compelled to write to you as an Australian Citizen to tell you my thoughts of a recent bill that has been tabled for consideration.

I have recently met a new friend. He is a well spoken, hard working, loyal and altogether a typical Aussie guy. He has humour, wit and a strong sense of what is right and wrong. He works 40 hours a week and values the experience of contributing to a community in the work he does. He certainly doesn't boast about his day or what he achieves. The people that come into contact with him are appreciative of what he contributes to their day, and some even believe that in what he does, he makes their day.

In my recent readings I have discovered that, under the terms of this bill, that my friend, this Aussie, may be denied the ability to live here and keep contributing to a country which he loves as much as I do. My Aussie friend came to be an Aussie on a vocational education sector visa. In short he wanted to be here so much he came from his place of birth in India and worked here in a vocational training course. He chose to be here out of passion for what this country can offer someone who works hard and is dedicated to the service of a cause. A good days work, for a decent days pay; Is that not the unofficial motto of our country?

However, as you may realise, my friend has an unavoidable and unfortunate problem that this legislation seeks to address. You see, I came to be Australian with my convict ancestors stealing and being thrown on a boat and being forced here against their will. My friend came to be an Aussie by paying exorbitant fee's to study here (upwards of \$30 000 – which you may remember used to be sufficient to put a decent deposit on a house.) and then working in a trade the country needed at the time.

He rolled the dice for a chance at a new, liberated and rewarding life. There was never any certainty in what he did, which I suppose is being played upon now, but he believed in what this country stood for. Namely he believes in hard work and the opportunity to better one's self. He believes that contribution to a community, to a purpose and to a workforce serves to enrich the greater. However, now that the dice have been rolled, the rules of the game are seemingly about to change. Australia prides itself in being the country of the "Fair go" and of "Hard Yakka" being its most prized and productive commodity. How can this notion stand when we are on the precipice of removing hard working and dedicated people who are so passionate about this country and what it stands for?

He has contributed to this country more than most of the people I have known who found themselves born here by happenstance. He has been vilified and discriminated against, based on the colour of his skin and the accent in his voice, more than I would wish on an enemy! Yet, he still loves this country, wants to contribute and moreover- he belongs here. He applied for residency in November last year, immediately after he had completed his studies and has waited patiently in the queue for the opportunity to be part of this.

Speaking personally if I were from another country, I had been lured here, paid a small fortune to be here, gone through all proper channels to assure my residency and

in the meantime worked tirelessly as part of a community then I would deem it reasonable that there would be some implied “gentleman’s agreement” to my stay. With Australia’s reputation of fairness I would have thought this would ensure, if I waited my turn and completed my duty to this society that I should one day, be a part of it on paper in addition to in spirit.

I passionately implore anyone who places value in the meaning of being an Australian, or anyone who places value in the principle of fairness to look closely at this legislation and what it could potentially do to valuable members of our society.

The key thing to realise is that the people that will no longer be accommodated within Australia, should this proposal be realised, are the ones who have paid, worked, contributed and want to be here. They have not been smuggled on a boat and drained the taxpayer. They are here, working and want to contribute. They have paid their own way and continue to do so. They have, in some instances been lured here for the high fees that they would pay as students and been treated as the proverbial “cash cows” only now to potentially be sent away, once the government considers that they have outlived their usefulness.

The legislation proposed can only be driven by a finite number of things- Xenophobia, Greed, Deception or Carelessness. In short it has been derived of the worst traits of human character and things that are as far from the quintessential Australian as you can get. I urge anyone with a conscience to speak out and speak loud to ensure this multi cultural democracy functions as it was always meant to: with all who have contributed and earned the right to have their say to be heard and considered, and all who love this country having the right to stay and continue to be a valuable member of our amazing country.

I thank you for your time in considering my thoughts on this matter.

Sincerely,

Mark Burgess.