

May 18, 2017

Committee Secretary
Senate Education and Employment Committees
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Subject: Higher Education Support Legislation Amendment (A More Sustainable, Responsive and Transparent Higher Education System) Bill 2017

Attention: Committee Secretary

I am deeply concerned with respect to implication of the proposed Higher Education Reform changes introduced with the 2017 Federal Budget.

I am a Permanent Resident and was eligible to apply for Australian Citizenship on June 11, 2017 until the proposed changes were brought forward on April 20th, 2017 and as a consequence, I will be impacted significantly by the proposed changes to Higher Education.

The proposed bill states that permanent resident students already enrolled will be able to maintain Commonwealth Supported Place. My daughter is in a guaranteed entry program for medicine at Griffith University. Her program is made up of two degrees. She finishes her "fast-tracked" 3-year Bachelor of Medical Science in 2 years and will then start her Medicine degree in January 2018. If these degrees are considered separate courses (although the same continuous program as defined by the university) then we would be unable to afford the potential loss of Commonwealth support. This change would be very unfair as her decision to accept the place to study medicine at Griffith University was based on the conditions of our Permanent Residency that were granted on June 11th, 2016. There was no indication at the time our Permanent Residency was granted that any changes were being considered.

My youngest son graduates from high school in Queensland in 2017 and would no longer have access to Commonwealth Support for his university education. Again, the massive financial impact of this change seems very unfair as we planned around this condition and our future Australian Citizenship based on the conditions provided to us upon receiving our Permanent Residency.

We were forced to send our oldest son back to Canada for university based on the International Tuition rates in Australia being unaffordable while we were temporary residents. He dreams of returning to Australia to work with his Bachelor of Commerce (Finance and Accounting) degree.

I worry the proposed legislation changes to Higher Education and Citizenship will alienate hard-working taxpayers like myself making it very difficult to achieve Australian Citizenship. It seems fair to apply changes to "future permanent residents"; however, those already granted permanent residence status should have their benefits grandfathered.

Thank-you,

Kevin E. Balshaw, BSc., MSc., P.Geol