

Migration Amendment (Strengthening Biometrics Integrity) Bill 2015

Subject: Migration Amendment (Strengthening Biometrics Integrity) Bill 2015

Date: Thursday, 9th April 2015

To: Committee Secretary, Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee

This Bill makes adjustments and repeals to the Migration Act to allow the extended use of biometric data (finger prints, iris scans, voice recordings, photographs, signatures etc.) to determine identity at Australia's borders. It appears that the Bill's intention is to increase the likelihood that known criminals and terrorists are prevented from entering Australia.

However, I am concerned that the increased emphasis on biometric data may lead to people being refused entry if it is not possible to source baseline data to compare to that collected on arrival. This could affect ordinary citizens returning to Australia from overseas, but may be particularly detrimental to those seeking asylum in Australia.

Minister Dutton has stated that this Bill will assist the Department of Immigration and Border Protection to assess asylum seekers who are waiting to get refugee status. It may not be possible to access baseline data for people who are fleeing countries which do not maintain, or refuse to supply, this data. If it is not possible to check biometric data collected from asylum seekers on arrival, it is possible they may be returned (refouled) or arbitrarily detained, leading to a denial of their human rights.

Thank you for taking this submission into consideration.

Pam Jacobs