

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100, Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

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

Dear Secretary,

I, Ganesh Koramannil, would like to like to make the following submission with respect to the Australian Citizenship Legislation Amendment (Strengthening the Commitments for Australian Citizenship and Other Measures) Bill 2018. I am making this submission solely as a proud Australian and not in any of my professional capacities.

As an Australian I certainly support the conversation about immigration, social cohesion and the future of our nation. However, it should take place with an intent to charter our future as an emerging nation with a strong identity, pride and self-respect.

I strongly believe that there is no good or bad migration and Australia has always benefited immensely from people mobility. Be it in the form of any migration Australia has experienced post 'First Fleet' - be it the Ten Pound POMs, be it the Boat People from Vietnam or be it the newly arriving migrants who meet targeted skills and character requirements stipulated by Australian laws, every individual and every group has contributed to the progress and prosperity of our nation.

I believe that our system can further be improved in certain areas. I would hereby like to present some of these aspects that I think are critical in the discussion. May I present the following suggestions for the Committee's consideration.

1. We certainly need to have more qualified and eligible migrants on track to integrating into Australian society as one amongst us. The suggested way to make this happen is to have more migrants coming in as permanent residents and providing them with a clear cut pathway to citizenship. Australian citizenship is a coveted honour and every new citizen would have had sufficient experience to realize this.
2. Sufficient amount of time be provided for migrants to integrate with Australian culture and ensure that the values of equality, fair go, civic sense and responsibility, and

human dignity are better understood and thereby become active participants in the nation building process. English proficiency is important to succeed in the Australian context however, it may be aligned to the levels required for their trade or profession. Family members should have the same freedom to remain contented with their skills and education as any other comparable Australian family members would have.

3. The link to our Indigenous past and its present and future relevance be included as a mandatory requirement for citizenship. An Australian who doesn't understand Australia's past cannot become integral to its present and hence, to the future either. This is a significantly missing aspect most migrants miss in our present system. This cultural integration be led by local Indigenous people. Building and sustaining this link to our Indigenous heritage would be in line with our commitment to reconciliation, and a shared future for us and our future generations.

Any amendments to the Citizenship Legislation should ensure the continuity of the practice of equality of all citizens irrespective of their personal, social, religious or political affiliations. Any suggestion that we treat any specific groups of citizens differently is indeed discriminatory no matter how it gets camouflaged in seemingly logical arguments.

I would also like to submit that the possible example of citizenship framework of the UAE is fundamentally flawed and is not comparable to Australian context. Because, if we applied the logic used in the UAE, any Australian citizen to get social security and other benefits would be required to have their lineage documented in a potential family or lineage register held by one of the many Indigenous traditional owners of this land. It is ironic to target immigrants especially from Islamic countries while suggesting the model used by another Islamic nation for potential adaptation.

Hence, I would like to conclude that while discussions around improvements to our citizenship laws and framework should be ongoing to keep up with the times, it should be with a sole focus on the shared collective future of all Australians past, present and future.

I thank the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee for the opportunity to make this submission.