

I wish to make the following submission to the Inquiry into the Australian Citizenship Legislation Amendment (Strengthening the Commitments for Australian Citizenship and Other Measures) Bill 2018.

I am not opposed to ensuring that Australian citizenship is granted only to people of good character who wish to make Australia their permanent home. As a migrant myself, I cherish my Australian citizenship and have endeavoured to make a real contribution to the nation and country I love. In turn, Australia benefitted from accepting as a citizen a person who had been educated and gained extensive professional and life experience overseas before migrating. It was in the best sense a win-win.

I do, however, oppose attempts to make citizenship more difficult for ideological, racial or any other reasons not to do with an applicant's fitness to be a member of the Australian family. In particular, I oppose extending the waiting period to eight years.

People who come to make Australia their home of course need a time to find whether or not they are suited to being a member of our nation – and Australia needs time to ensure they are worthy of citizenship.

However, I believe that with the resources available in the modern age, both can be accomplished within a far shorter time than eight years, which seems excessive and mean-spirited.

Most migrants (including refugees) come to Australia full of hope and the determination to create a new life for themselves and their loved ones. They arrive full of energy and inspiration. We should welcome them into our nation while this energy and enthusiasm still burns brightly within them.

To make them wait eight years can only dim the bright light of hope in their hearts, forcing them to stand on the sidelines of Australian public life till they are no longer inspired to contribute as citizens.

Far from making them wait longer till the hope and commitment dims, we should actively encourage them to aspire to citizenship at the earliest opportunity, so they can contribute fully to the country they so desire to call home.

I respectfully submit this as someone who has experienced the above and has found the granting of Australian citizenship one of the most important events of my 66 years of life.