



Family unity and the migration treatment of disability

The Federal Parliament's Migration Committee will hold its first public hearing of 2010 in Brisbane on Thursday 28 January. The Committee is half way through a report on disability and migration.

'The Committee's investigations last year highlighted the conflict between Australia's human rights commitments to protect family unity among Australian expats, skilled migrants and refugees, and the impact of migration assessment which may exclude dependent children or other family members from residency because of their disability', Migration Committee Chair Michael Danby stated.

The Committee heard that the current migration health requirement may force successful skilled applicants to choose between filling the job in Australia and family unity, if they have a child with a disability. Refugees seeking asylum have faced difficulties in circumstances where family members have asylum claims rejected on the basis of their disability.

The Brisbane hearing will provide opportunities for organisations such as the Queensland Parents for People with a Disability, migration experts defending families with vulnerable members, and refugees with a disability to address the Committee directly about their experiences. There will also be time for members of the public attending the meeting to make a statement on the record.

Mr Danby stated: 'Advocates for people with disabilities recognise that a strong family unit is the most effective support and safeguard for them. Australian migration law should maintain the entitlement of children and adults with a disability to their family's continuing support.'

'With Australia Day just celebrated, it should also be remembered that Australia's success as a multicultural nation has been built on the energy and commitment of migrant and refugee families. The Committee will consider how this can be better recognised in migration evaluations of family members with a disability', Mr Danby said.

The public hearing will commence at 10.30 am in the **Undumbi Room, 5th Floor, Parliamentary Annexe cnr George and Alice Streets, Queensland Parliament, Brisbane**

Members of the public and the media are welcome. Hearing loops will be provided. For media comment, please contact the Committee Chair, Michael Danby MP, on (02) 6277 4520.

For more information including a full programme of proceedings and the inquiry terms of reference, visit the inquiry website at www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/mig/disability/index.htm or contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4560 or e-mail jscm@aph.gov.au.