



Parliamentary Disability Inquiry moves to Melbourne

The Joint Standing Committee on Migration's inquiry into the migration treatment of disability moves to Melbourne this week.

At its last hearing in Brisbane in January, and throughout 2009, the Committee has heard of the plight of many individuals with a disability and their families who seek to come to Australia. Another theme has been the disparity between the international commitments made by Australia and the criteria in the health test in the *Migration Act 1958 (Cth)*. "Members of the public who have testified to the inquiry have questioned inflexible criteria which results in doctors appointed by the Commonwealth Medical Officer effectively excluding skilled immigrants because of the worst case cost scenario attributed to disabled members of their families," Migration Committee Chair Michael Danby said.

The Committee heard that the current migration health requirement may force successful skilled applicants to choose between filling a 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.

"Many individuals who seek to make economic and social contributions to Australia have found themselves in the unenviable position of being rejected for a visa based on their disability", Mr Danby stated.

The Committee will hear from a range of stakeholders and will again maximise its opportunity to gain a range of views through several roundtables. Opportunities will be provided for such bodies as the Law Institute of Victoria, Australian Federation of Disability Organisations and several peak bodies representing those with Down Syndrome, hearing or sight impairments, and haemophilia to present their views to the Committee.

The public hearing will commence at 9.30am in Seminar Room 1 of the Monash Conference Centre, Level 7, 30 Collins St Melbourne. Visitors are welcome to attend.

A program of proceedings is available on the Committee's website.

For media comment, please contact the Committee Chair, Michael Danby MP, on (02) 6277 4520. For more information 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 jscm@aph.gov.au.