



Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Tuesday 10th April 2018

Social Services Legislation Amendment (Encouraging Self-sufficiency for Newly Arrived Migrants) Bill 2018

Dear Committee Secretary,

We welcome the opportunity to provide a response to the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Encouraging Self-sufficiency for Newly Arrived Migrants) Bill 2018. MYAN NSW engages, connects and build the capacity of the youth, settlement and multicultural sectors to effectively meet the needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. We support the development of young people's skills and networks to engage in advocacy and influence the regional, state and national agenda. Our vision is that all young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in NSW can access the support and opportunities they need to be active citizens in Australian society.

Recommendations:

MYAN NSW opposes the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Encouraging Self-Sufficiency for Newly Arrived Migrants) Bill 2018 and recommends that it be rejected by the Parliament.

Overview:

MYAN NSW believes that plans to increase newly arrived resident's waiting periods (NARWP) from two years to three years for a range of social security payments and introduce a three-year NARWP for a further range of payments not previously requiring a waiting period would significantly impact vulnerable migrants and undermine Australia's successful migration and settlement program. In particular, we feel migrant children and young people would be the most adversely affected by these changes.

Australia benefits when migrants are supported to settle well and it is in our best interests to invest in a flexible and responsive system that facilitates good settlement outcomes, rather than implementing unnecessary measures rendering the settlement journey more difficult. MYAN NSW believes the proposed legislation imposes considerable financial hardship on newly arrived families and would effectively create an underclass of vulnerable migrants who should be supported as they transition to a new life in Australia. We fear the proposed Bill is punitive of those arriving under the Skilled migration programme, whose critical skills have been identified as key to achieving economic prosperity, particularly in regional areas where skills shortages are often acute¹.

Young people and employment:

Despite the challenges of the migration experience, migrant young people are immensely resilient². They have a range of strengths, skills and resources, including:

¹ Taylor, A., Bell, L., and Gerritsen, R. (2014), 'Benefits of Skilled Migration Programs for Regional Australia: Perspectives from the Northern Territory', *Journal of Economic and Social Policy*, 16(1).

² MYAN Australia (2016), *National Youth Settlement Framework*, Centre for Multicultural Youth: Melbourne.

- International and cross-cultural knowledge
- Multilingual skills
- High educational aspirations
- Adaptability and resourcefulness
- Strong sense of family and community
- Desire to uphold the rights and responsibilities of Australia's democratic processes

While they are eager to embrace the opportunities to actively participate in Australian society, a recent report by MYAN Australia, VicHealth and the CSIRO's Data61³ highlights significant barriers to employment for migrant young people. The report highlights that migrant and refugee students are less likely to find full-time employment after they graduate (45%) compared to students born in Australia (69%). Factors affecting securing full-time employment include racial discrimination, lack of understanding of the Australian job market and overseas skills and qualifications not being recognised. In addition, the casualisation of the employment market (or the 'gig economy') means that migrant young people are more likely to be underemployed or working part-time, as well as being vulnerable to workplace exploitation and other precarious working conditions. MYAN NSW believes the proposed legislation changes would make migrant young people more susceptible to financial hardship, despite evidence indicating that they may need additional support to overcome barriers to employment.

Young people with refugee-like experiences:

It is important to note that there are many young people who, while not arriving in Australia as refugees through the Humanitarian programme, have had refugee-like experiences. Some of these young people arrive through the Family Stream Migration Programme on Orphan Relative or Remaining Relative visas. This means that even though their experiences prior to arrival in Australia and in the settlement context may be similar to refugee or humanitarian entrants, they may not have access to settlement services available to those arriving through the Humanitarian Programme⁴.

Between 2012 and 2017, 2,122 children and young people arrived in Australia on Orphan Relative and Remaining Relative visas⁵. The vast majority of these children and young people come from countries where there is protracted conflict or humanitarian crises e.g. Afghanistan, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia. MYAN NSW believes that these vulnerable young people and their families should be able to access the support necessary to transition well to life in Australia, and that increasing waiting periods for them to qualify for payments such as Youth Allowance and the Family Tax Benefit would hinder good settlement outcomes and exclude them from opportunities to fully participate in Australian society.

We strongly urge the Committee to reject the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Encouraging Self-sufficiency for Newly Arrived Migrants) Bill and invite any further questions in relation to the comments expressed.

Yours sincerely,



Alexandra Long
Executive Officer
MYAN NSW
alex@myansw.org.au

³ VicHealth, Data61, CSIRO and MYAN (2017), Bright Futures: Spotlight on the wellbeing of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation: Melbourne.

⁴ MYAN Australia, Op. cit., p.11.

⁵ Statistics have been sourced directly from the Department of Settlement Services via the online Settlement Reporting Facility. This data is subject to a number of caveats. Details can be found at <http://bit.ly/2D1Ahmp>.