



MEDIA RELEASE

Senator Sue Boyce

Liberal - Queensland

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REMOVE THE MIGRATION BAR ON DISABILITY: SENATOR SUE BOYCE

People with a disability seeking to migrate to Australia should be treated exactly the same as other potential immigrants and not be subjected to any discrimination, Queensland Liberal Senator Sue Boyce said today.

Senator Boyce, a member of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Migration, said while the Committee's report and recommendations, tabled in the House of Representatives tonight, was a significant step forward in removing this discrimination, there was still a need to ensure a level playing field for all immigrants.

"The report does urge the government to take action that would lead to real and positive changes for people with a disability and their families if they want to make a life in Australia but in my view it does not go far enough," Senator Boyce said.

Senator Boyce was joined by South Australian Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young in attaching additional comments to the Committee report urging far-reaching reforms beyond the Committee's recommendations.

"For a start, the *Migration Act 1958* should not be exempted from the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* if Australia is to have a completely non-discriminatory immigration policy," she said.

"If that is not accepted that the government should acknowledge that rejecting temporary visa holders as permanent visa holders solely on the basis of the birth of a child with a disability is discriminatory and protocols should be developed to address this."

Senator Boyce said the existing migration laws treated a disability as if it was a disease.

She said two Committee witnesses, the Disability Discrimination Commissioner Mr Graeme Innes AM and Sydney University Law Professor Ron McCallum AO, had made the point that if they had not been fortunate enough to have been born in Australia, in all probability they would have been refused entry under these existing laws.

"These existing laws don't just treat people with a disability as second class citizens, they are robbing Australia of people who could enrich and contribute to our society," Senator Boyce said.

"If, for example, we treated other potential immigrants in the same way by saying that they might not be able to contribute and that they might be a drain on the taxpayer, then there would be an uproar and rightfully so. Imagine trying to justify an immigration policy that said people from certain countries or of certain religions should face discrimination because they might not fit in."

"We should have a fair, just and humane immigration policy and not treat people with a disability as nothing more than a useless drain on the taxpayers."

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