

SOCIAL SERVICES AND COMMUNITY

Submission on the Immigration, Refugee and Tourism Bill

To the Social Services and Community Committee,

My name is Jane Doe and I live in Invercargill. Though I come from Canada originally, I have lived in New Zealand for 5 years now and hold a residence class visa. I am here today not only to represent the average New Zealand resident, whom this Bill's restrictions surrounding foreign buyers will greatly affect, but also as a concerned academic, whose students - and consequently New Zealand's potential workforce - will be limited by this Bill. Specifically, I am opposed to clause **10**.

I live and work in New Zealand with my two children, who have both been brought up here. We currently live in a small home with severe heating and plumbing issues, but as a solo parent with a limited income, I haven't yet been able to afford a new home. Our hope is to be in a new house by the end of next year.

Over the past month, the health of my father - who lives back in Canada - has deteriorated, meaning he is going to need more and more support over the coming year. As a result, my children and I will have to spend a majority of 2019 back in Canada, caring for him. We hope to return to New Zealand at the end of it, as this is now our home.

With the Bill as it stands, however, requiring at least 183 days in New Zealand in order to buy a residential property, when I return to New Zealand at the end of this period overseas, I will not be able to buy the new home we so desperately need. This seems like a major, overly restrictive flaw in this Bill, and whilst this particular situation may seem specific to me and my family, this clause could affect many others in similar situations.

A retired New Zealand permanent resident, for example, who wants to downsize into a smaller home, and who also wants to spend more time with his family overseas, would not be able to do so because of clause **10(2)**. This seems ridiculous. It needs to be recognised and understood that, although many residents are devoted to New Zealand and consider it their home, many of us also have commitments and families overseas; this should not limit our property rights.

Therefore I urge you to lower the amount of time a resident must spend in New Zealand in order to be eligible to buy residential property.

Furthermore, from a less personal point of view, I have identified another flaw in this Bill. I work for the Southern Institute of Technology. Each year, we have a large number of international students graduating with skills that would hugely benefit New Zealand, and which are included in our skills shortage lists. However, though they would still probably be able to obtain work visas, this Bill would prevent them from being able to buy a home in Invercargill, even though there is no recognised Invercargill housing crisis or shortage of homes, and thus impact their capacity to live and work here. This seems like a massive waste of their potential to provide the skills New Zealand - and especially smaller centres like Invercargill - need.

Therefore, I recommend that, if this Bill's limitations are to be imposed, they be restricted to areas with a real housing crisis, as opposed to unnecessarily limiting the development of the workforces and communities of smaller towns and cities like Invercargill.

Thank you for your time.

ENVIRONMENT

Submission on the Immigration, Refugee and Tourism Bill

To the Environment Committee,

My name is John Doe and I am here today to make a submission on behalf of the Bed & Breakfast Association of New Zealand. I speak for a number of the bed and breakfasts, homestays and farmstays that operate here in New Zealand when I express my concern at the emission reduction targets set for all "accommodation providers" by the proposed Bill.

Clause **18(1)** calls on "all tourism-related businesses" to reduce their net greenhouse gas emissions by 30%. Under sub-clause **4**, this applies to all "accommodation providers". It is our wish and recommendation that the businesses we represent - bed and breakfasts, homestays and farmstays - be exempt from this obligation.

As smaller, boutique businesses that, for now, need to focus our efforts on matters of business and development in order to compete with the country's larger chain hotels, we question the feasibility of the targets this Bill would impose. The proposed reduction would require significant investment in new, more energy efficient technology - appliances, lighting, heating and cooling systems; further investment in drastic infrastructure changes to make our buildings more energy efficient; and even further investment in renewable energy. This would amount to a significant financial burden that large, lucrative chains would be able to bear, but that smaller businesses such as ours would struggle with significantly.

This is not to say, of course, that our businesses will not continue to make a conscious effort to reduce our carbon footprints. However, we need to be allowed to do this at our own pace, and free from the threat of fines - even further financial burden! - if we fail to fulfil our obligations.

This clause seems contrary to the Government's ostensible commitment to supporting small businesses in general, as the source of almost \$65 billion of the country's GDP. If the Government wants us to continue to drive the economy in this way, we recommend that they reconsider such an inhibitive clause.

Thank you for your time.

EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

Submission on the Immigration, Refugee and Tourism Bill

To the Education and Workforce Committee,

My name is Jose Doe and I am from Ecuador. I have been working in New Zealand as a building surveyor for 3 years now. This is a job listed on the Immediate Skills Shortage List, so accordingly I am here on an Essential Skills visa.

I am deeply concerned by the changes proposed by this Bill, specifically in clauses **7(1)** and **(2)**, regarding the introduction of a maximum duration of 3 years to the Essential Skills visa, and the requirement that we (foreign workers) have to spend 12 months abroad before reapplying. If this were to remain in the Bill, it would mean I have to leave at the end of this year, fly back to Ecuador, spend 12 months there, before deciding whether I want to return.

Firstly, on a personal level, I am against this change as it is obviously greatly disruptive to the lives of foreign workers, here in New Zealand. It means we must shift our lives temporarily, lose our current jobs, pay to return home, and look for short-term work back home if we want any chance of being able to afford to come back to New Zealand. Obviously, many foreign workers come to New Zealand not for want of the kiwi experience, but out of necessity. For many, we come because there aren't jobs back home, or living conditions are dire. To return home for 12 months would be a huge financial burden for us.

Furthermore, even though we are not New Zealand citizens, I find it very disheartening that the New Zealand Government does not seem to care about the impact of this new provision on its foreign workers, despite all that we have contributed to its workforce and economy over the 3 years we have worked here. Do they not owe us some thanks for providing the skills they lack? I, for one, feel underappreciated, and, to be frank, I would probably decide not to return to New Zealand after my 12 months back home, and instead find a more welcoming nation to work in. If New Zealand wants our skills, Parliament should strongly reconsider such a deterrent provision.

Secondly, my job is not one that just anyone could do, or that requires minimal training. It is one that I have had to undergo years of specialised training for, obtain a qualification that is level 6 or above in the New Zealand Qualifications Framework, and have had years of work experience in. I think it is therefore fair to say that I am not a worker of little value - I have worked hard to be able to provide the skills New Zealand needs.

I could maybe understand the imposition of a 3 year maximum for workers in jobs of a lower skill level, but I think workers in jobs such as mine deserve better! My advice would therefore be: if Parliament insists upon introducing a maximum duration of stay, then only make it applicable to jobs of a lower skill level, so that higher skilled workers are able to remain and continue to provide our invaluable skills.

How this could skill level would be measured, I am not sure; that is up to the committee to discuss and decide.

I am sure I speak for many foreign workers when I express these concerns, and I hope you take on all that I have said. Thank you for your time.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE

Submission on the Immigration, Refugee and Tourism Bill

To the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee,

My name is John Doe, and I am here today to provide what is hopefully some expertise regarding the proposed changes to asylum seeker detention laws.

I am the national border manager at Immigration New Zealand, meaning I lead the team that is tasked with international arrivals and border control. As it stands, I see the proposed relaxation of detention requirements as a dangerous and ill-advised move, for reasons that I will set out in this submission.

As many of you will know, the Immigration Act was amended in 2013, under the Immigration Amendment (Mass Arrivals) Bill. The primary purpose of this Bill was to protect New Zealand against people smugglers (after the furore in Australia), through extending the mandatory detention period for mass arrivals.

This extension was not at all arbitrary, and was based on similar legislation passed by Canada and Australia - two nations which have struggled with the very issues this amendment Bill aimed to avoid.

Though the Bill received some negative feedback at the time from refugee organisations and human rights activists, and was criticized as being unnecessary due to New Zealand's isolation and the unlikelihood of mass arrivals, I cannot stress enough that our distance and perceived remoteness does not make us immune to such risks.

Clause **13(2)** of the current Bill introduces a maximum detention period of 3 months, regardless of arrival group size. This shortened detention period will not give our asylum seeker team at INZ adequate time to process the applications of asylum seekers, nor vet them for security reasons. This will no doubt strain our team, and require additional staff and resources (a financial burden for INZ). More importantly, however, it could also jeopardise the quality of the security vetting process. Therefore this becomes a matter of national security.

I feel I must add that this is not to say that I do not care for the wellbeing and safety of asylum seekers; I just don't think that relaxing detention periods is the right way to go about it. Instead I say, how better to protect asylum seekers and secure their rights, than to address the people smugglers who exploit them? Currently, there is no NZ legislation that specifically addresses the *smugglers*, rather than the *smuglees*. New Zealand could draw inspiration from Canada, whose legislation aims to deter people smugglers, by focusing on the smugglers themselves. We could, for example, impose a minimum sanction on people smugglers, or expand the scope of the offence. Surely this is a greater protection for asylum seekers than weakened laws that will, if anything, encourage people smuggling due to the ease with which smugglers will now be able to traffic people across our borders.

I urge you to take on board what I have said, and I hope this advice has been useful. Thank you for your time.