



THE HON ANDREW GILES MP
MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION, CITIZENSHIP AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

Dear Senator McKim,

Thank you for the ongoing discussions regarding the Pacific Engagement Visa, and the *Migration Amendment (Australia's Engagement in the Pacific and Other Measures) Bill 2023* currently listed for debate in the Senate.

Boosting Pacific permanent migration to Australia is an essential part of the Albanese Government's plan to build a stronger Pacific family.

The Pacific Engagement Visa is a key part of the plan and seeks to grow Australia's Pacific and Timor-Leste diaspora, enhance people-to-people links, and encourage greater cultural, economic and education exchange with our closest neighbours.

The Albanese Government has been working closely with our Pacific neighbours to design a Pacific Engagement Visa that supports both their and our longer-term ambitions and operates in a timely and effective manner.

As part of that design work a ballot has been proposed as part of the selection process. The ballot itself is important to Pacific governments, with the Deputy Prime Minister of Fiji, Biman Prasad, recently saying:

"It seems that the proposed lottery mechanism has become the sticking point in Australia. However, this is the mechanism used by New Zealand and widely accepted in the Pacific as fair. Any other approach used by Australia would raise suspicion in the region."

The ballot is pivotal to the operation of the system to ensure fairness, prevent brain-drain, and ensure backlogs do not arise. You have indicated your party is not opposed in principle to the ballot.

This is reflected in the Green's additional comments to the Senate Committee report into the Bill. I am pleased to note the Albanese Government will support Senator Pocock's amendment, which addresses your concerns. I note this amendment responds to the only recommendation made by the Greens in the final Committee report.

For the past few months we have been discussing changes that the Greens seek to the migration health framework.

Following my swearing in as the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, I asked for advice on this topic as I do not believe the current migration health framework meets the expectation of the Australian community. This is a position I have put publicly when asked – and directly to numerous stakeholders and community advocates.

I appreciate your good faith engagement to date on these matters. In recognition of your advocacy, and strong commitment to those affected by the migration health requirement, I will ask the Department of Home Affairs to undertake a review of the Significant Cost Threshold, led by the Department's Chief Medical Officer.

The Review will include how costs are calculated, where thresholds are set, and provide for public consultation, including submissions. The Review will consider the findings of previous inquiries.

The Terms of Reference will include a specific reference to the effect of the Significant Cost Threshold on non-citizen children born in Australia to people on temporary visas, which impedes some families from making a life in Australia.

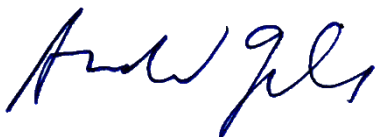
The Terms of Reference will also include how education expenditure, including special education, is included in the Significant Cost Threshold.

In the meantime, any child born in Australia and adversely affected by the migration health rules can apply for ministerial intervention after merits review. As Minister, I prioritise these cases and have positively intervened in all such cases that have come before me.

The Review will begin as soon as practicable and be completed within six months. The Review will be made public after a period of deliberation from the Albanese Government of no more than three months.

I look forward to receiving your support for the Pacific Engagement Visa, and the Migration Amendment (Australia's Engagement in the Pacific and Other Measures) Bill and assure you the Albanese Government will continue to work collaboratively to resolve matters of interest to us both.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Giles', written in a cursive style.

ANDREW GILES

16/10/2023