

27 July 2021

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
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Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
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To the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee,

Re: Social Services Legislation Amendment (Consistent Waiting Periods for New Migrants) Bill 2021

TasCOSS is writing to support ACOSS' submission to this Inquiry and strongly urge the Committee to recommend that the bill not be passed.

TasCOSS advocates on behalf of low income Tasmanians who are experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage. We advocate for public policy that values and respects the diversity of Tasmanians and makes a real difference to the lives of people who are experiencing vulnerability. Our work is heavily informed by the lived experiences of the Tasmanians we represent as well as by evidence-informed policy and human rights principles.

TasCOSS opposes this bill because it denies basic support to single parents, carers, new parents and children, without which many would have no income at all. It imperils the financial security of thousands in the middle of a pandemic which continues to affect people's ability to put a roof over their heads and food on the table.

TasCOSS estimates that approximately 1,900 families and 580 individual arrivals in Tasmania will be affected by these changes.¹ As highlighted in ACOSS's submission, TasCOSS expects that the vast majority of those affected will be women and children. This is because the payments targeted are paid to people who are providing care. The bill thus threatens to put a cohort of Tasmanian children at risk of living in deep poverty simply because their parents are migrants.

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¹ Figure based on Tasmania's share of 2019-20 migration program total ([DHA, p. 21](#)) and national impact estimate by [DSS here](#)

Due to its targeting of payments to carers, women and children the bill also risks:

- delaying childhood vaccinations and health checks which are tied to Family Tax Benefits;²
- putting greater pressure on formal care systems such as residential aged care;
- forcing many women to remain with an abusive partner because they cannot afford to leave; and
- undermining the Government's efforts to improve the safety and economic security of migrant women.³

In short, the proposed cuts are likely to deny people in need the essential support they require to raise their children, support themselves, and care for loved ones.

As noted in the ACOSS submission, many migrants spend years working in Australia before they achieve permanent residency.⁴ Waiting times for the processing of permanent visas are long, often measured in years instead of months.⁵ This means that people often live and work in Australia for many years before they are able to get permanent residency. The Newly Arrived Resident's Waiting Period of four years starts only once permanent residency is granted. After years of contribution to the social and economic life of the nation, it seems distinctly unfair to consider denying these 'new' arrivals the basic supports provided to other Australians.

The proposed cuts will only serve to deny permanent residents essential payments that help to support individual and community health and wellbeing and prevent deep poverty. TasCOSS therefore joins with ACOSS and calls on the Committee and the Federal Parliament to oppose the *Social Services Legislation Amendment (Consistent Waiting Periods for New Migrants) Bill 2021*.

Yours sincerely,



Adrienne Picone

Chief Executive Officer

² [Immunisation and Health Check requirements for Family Tax Benefit | Department of Social Services, Australian Government \(dss.gov.au\)](https://www.dss.gov.au/immigration-and-health-check-requirements-for-family-tax-benefit)

³ Treasury (2021) 'Budget Paper No. 2' https://budget.gov.au/2021-22/content/bp2/download/bp2_2021-22.pdf p.83

⁴ Economic Justice Australia (2021) 'Briefing: Budget 2021 Social Security Measures' https://www.ejaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/EJA-Budget-Briefing_2021-2022-V3.pdf

⁵ Department of Home Affairs, 'Visa processing times' 19 July 2021 <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-processing-times/global-visa-processing-times>