

Immigrant and Migrant Support and Resource Package Bill 2023

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Contents

Second Reading Speech	4
Explanatory Notes	5
Part 1 Preliminary	7
1 Name of Act	7
2 Commencement	7
3 Relationship with other Acts and laws	7
4 Objects	7
5 Definitions	7
Part 2 Cultural integration, inclusion and participation	7
6 Proactive measures to improve cultural integration, inclusion and participation in Australian society	7
Part 3 Accessible and affordable education for all immigrants and migrants	8
7 Proactive measures in ensuring accessible and affordable education for all immigrants and migrants	8
Part 4 Providing Accessible Health Services for Migrant and Immigrant Families	9
8 Proactive Measures to Improve Health Services for Migrant and Immigrant Individuals in NSW	9
Part 5 Providing Housing Support For Migrant and Immigrant Families	10
Division 1 Accessibility of the housing market	10
9 Language barriers	10
10 Cultural barriers	11
11 Societal barriers	11
12 Actions to assist migrant and immigrant families in housing market accessibility	11
Division 2 Readdressing supply deficits and affordability	11
13 Availability of social and affordable housing	11
14 Finding of affordable housing	11
15 Framework for access	11
Part 6 Education and Integration of Immigrants and Migrants Within the Workplace	11
16 Enhancing Job Accessibility	11
Schedule 3 Dictionary	13

Immigrant and Migrant Support and Resource Package Bill 2023

Act no. _____, 2023

A Bill for

An Act to review existing support systems for immigrants and migrants and introduce further measures compiled in an accessible resource package; and for other purposes.

Second Reading Speech

Mr Josh Abrok (Monaro—Minister for Inclusion and Diversity):

Though the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic have seemed to subside over the past year, the system through which migrants enter and are then processed in their efforts to settle in Australia has seen immigrants and newly Australian citizens alike experience significant barriers to successfully establishing themselves in the communities they relocate to. The issue at hand is access, whether it pertains to the access of interpretive and language-learning services for families with a first language that is not English, access to culturally responsive and equitable health services or access to social events and programs that promote acceptance and recognition of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) families. At the core of these access deficiencies is the lack of direct knowledge and promotion of these services, and such information that migrant and immigrant families need to settle safely and successfully.

As a multicultural nation leading in that respect, allowing families arriving from hardship and conflict to struggle to access the services they need to thrive here in Australia undermines our efforts towards creating and providing for a multicultural society. NSW's migrant population contributes greatly to many aspects of our state's economy and socio-cultural matrix, and providing adequate information and promotion of services that cater for their needs maximises their ability to participate in both. Our Inclusion and Diversity Committee does have a jurisdictional obligation to address this issue, but it goes beyond that.

Though immigration is an area that the Australian federal government has a jurisdictional monopoly on, our part comes in the post-immigration experience and improving the integration process of migrant families in urban and rural NSW areas. There is also a considerable correlation between state efforts to improve the lives of people that are of migrant background and people that live in rural and regional areas, as many migrant families tend to move to rural areas due to economic opportunity and urban congestion. Working towards building strategies and frameworks to create and promote migrant services tailored to rural and regional areas would be tackling multiple issues at once.

Our Bill aims to introduce a migrant information package to collate and promote services and resources that exist in NSW and specific areas within. The framework of the package would involve a gathering and evaluation of current online and easily accessible services available for migrants living anywhere in NSW, conduction of demographic and ethnographic research on particular migrant populations present in NSW (possibly in the form of consulting focus groups or conducting surveys) and consistent promotion of the information package through the production of paper products, a website and/or cinematic campaigns. There is also the possibility for employment and volunteering opportunities in the package's distribution.

We have made great progress in developing this Bill, and we hope the investment in this package will provide great information and support for migrants and their families.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Explanatory Notes

The emigration process in New South Wales has become complex and prolonged, and one which creates barriers and compromises the dignity of immigrants and migrants. Consequently, these forms socio-economic, well-being and integration issues. These issues can manifest as daily difficulties, such as a lack of accessibility to basic services as a result of language and cultural barriers, isolation of immigrant/migrant families, and an overall lack of awareness of assistance available to immigrants and migrants. All these factors have significantly contributed to the damaging ostracisation of this group in society.

With NSW's growing population of immigrant and migrant families, it is imperative that a review is conducted to improve the resources and services aiming to support them. By enacting this, migrants can enjoy the full benefits of citizenship including equal access to opportunities and services. This increase further supports NSW's path towards regrowth in relation to the economy after the recent disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which according to the 'United Workers Union', saw 94% of jobs held by migrants with temporary visas lost, stood down or had hours cut. Through further education and greater access to resources, *"NSW would benefit from skills, investment and population growth"*.

Within NSW, these barriers related to assistance and awareness make it exceedingly difficult for migrants to gain the sufficient recognition and services that they need. For instance, according to the refugee council's 'Job Active Report', refugees have extensive difficulties with obtaining sufficient language availability and have also experienced a disrupted education. Additionally, though the tide of discrimination has turned, according to ABC's report on racial discrimination in Australia, a two-year refugee by the name of 'Drishti' has stated that; *"discrimination is still an issue for migrants despite growing support for multiculturalism"*.

Historically, migration has been a much-debated topic, and assistance to those first entering Australia was scarce, if at all existent. In the mid-to-late 20th century and more recently, numerous services have become available to Australian immigrants and migrants, including but not limited to, the Australian Red Cross, Australian Migrants Resource Centre, AMES Australia (Adult Multicultural Education Services), Mercy Care, NSW Refugee Health Service, MARSS Australia Inc. (Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services)

Unfortunately, not all new immigrants and migrants are aware of these organisations and their services, which is why it is imperative for a mandatory information package to be implemented. This will ensure all immigrants and migrants are given the assistance, opportunities, and support they require. This bill will aim to identify some of the informational and outreach issues current organisations face and resolve them through the provision of the information package as a further resource.

The Youth Legislature of New South Wales enacts—

Part 1 Preliminary

1 Name of Act

This Act is the *Immigrant and Migrant Support and Resource Package Act 2023*.

2 Commencement

The Act commences on the date of assent of this Act.

3 Relationship with other Acts and laws

This Act prevails to the extent of an inconsistency with another Act or law.

4 Objects

The objects of this Act are to—

- (1) provide migrants, immigrants, asylum seekers and other individuals dwelling in Australia under protection visas with accessible and coherent information on—
 - (a) local organisations and multicultural-focused services that promote and enhance cultural integration through various programs and activities,
 - (b) education services for migrants and their children as well as further training opportunities specifically those targeted at supporting them to enter the workplace,
 - (c) employment services and initiatives that cater for multicultural families and individuals in the workplace as well as methods that can be taken to recognise educational certification and progress from other countries,
 - (d) the Australian health system and the specific services available and restricted to migrants, immigrants, asylum seekers and other individuals, and
 - (e) support systems that assist migrants, immigrants, asylum seekers and other individuals in searches for housing.

5 Definitions

The dictionary in Schedule 1 defines words used in this Bill.

Note— The *Interpretation Act 1987* also contains definitions and other provisions that affect the interpretation of this Bill.

Part 2 Cultural integration, inclusion and participation

6 Proactive measures to improve cultural integration, inclusion and participation in Australian society

- (1) The Government shall create proactive measures to improve cultural integration, inclusion and participation in Australian society, including—
 - (a) the provision of a digital or physical information source introducing Australian cultural expectations and values as well as supporting community multicultural events and relevant volunteer programs that promote understanding of Australian culture and values,

- (b) allocating funding and resources to encourage language acquisition programs, cultural orientation resources and programs targeted at the specific needs of immigrants and migrants,
- (c) providing translating and interpreting services and informing people migrating to Australia of their ability; especially for the illiterate/oral language speakers,
- (d) ensuring the compulsory implementation of simple English explanations of all government and community services, or
 - (a) as an alternative the requirement of translated information or the availability of a translator at all times,
- (e) facilitating partnerships between community organisations to allow for mentorship programs and networking opportunities for immigrants and migrants,
- (f) the provision of cultural and religious institutions that encourage the social participation of immigrants and migrants within their local communities,
- (g) promoting and supporting immigrant and migrant youth inclusion by encouraging them to share their experiences and culture and learn about Australian culture through cultural exchange programs and events,
- (h) providing localised information on emergency services available in certain areas.
- (i) providing family and social support,
- (j) linking recent immigrants and migrants to established community groups and organisations to assist with social integration,
- (k) ensuring immigrants and migrants are aware of cultural food available to them in the area and meal service providers,
- (l) highlighting the availability of localised and place-based free activities, sport and entertainment,
- (m) the provision of legal and financial advice and support in order to avoid the exploitation of immigrants and migrants,
- (n) the provision of information regarding reporting services if exploitation occurs, and
- (o) ensuring review of policies and making necessary updates to legislation in order to remove barriers, address inequalities and promote equal opportunities.

Part 3 Accessible and affordable education for all immigrants and migrants

7 Proactive measures in ensuring accessible and affordable education for all immigrants and migrants

- (1) The Government shall create proactive measures to provide accessible and affordable education for all immigrants and migrants, including—

- (a) providing financial aid and scholarships tailored to immigrants alleviates financial barriers to education,
- (b) offering language and cultural support services can facilitate the integration of immigrants into the academic environment,
- (c) ensuring the children of those who have migrated to Australia have equal opportunities to education through free and accessible schooling and/or childcare,
- (d) establishing strategic partnerships with community organisations provides additional resources and support to immigrant students,
- (e) outreach programs can increase awareness of available resources and support services, empowering students to make informed decisions about their academic pursuits,
- (f) enhancing accessibility and affordability of education for immigrants can promote diversity and inclusivity, contributing to a more vibrant and equitable society,
- (g) developing targeted recruitment strategies to encourage more immigrants to pursue higher education,
- (h) offering flexible course schedules and online learning options to accommodate the unique needs of immigrant students,
- (i) encouraging cross-cultural exchange and dialogue to promote understanding and respect among students from diverse backgrounds,
- (j) advocating for policies that promote equal access to education for all, regardless of immigration status, and
- (k) learning about the culture and history of the country they migrated to assists them with having a sense of familiarity and understanding of a new environment.

Part 4 Providing Accessible Health Services for Migrant and Immigrant Families

8 Proactive Measures to Improve Health Services for Migrant and Immigrant Individuals in NSW

- (1) The Government shall create proactive measures to improve health services for migrant and immigrant individuals in NSW, including—
 - (a) providing clear information and an indication of the conditions of visa categories and subclasses that impact a person's ability to access Australian services and programs, such as Medicare,
 - (b) funding and promoting mental health services, including counselling for survivors of torture and refugee trauma exist in every state and territory in Australia,
 - (c) providing staff with cultural sensitivity training to avoid failing to adopt health care techniques that accommodate past trauma and human rights violations,

- (d) funding scholarships and other employment incentives to encourage bicultural workers to enter the healthcare industry and act as service brokers,
- (e) collocating health services with other frequently used services for refugees to increase ease of access to information on health insurance providers and requirements for immigrants and migrants,
- (f) directing migrants and immigrants to bilingual health care providers and interpreters for communication during health care,
- (g) encouraging general practitioners and healthcare providers in using telephone interpreter services to cater for immigrant and migrant patients,
- (h) promoting reliance on online forms of communication for general practitioners and healthcare providers working in rural and regional areas,
- (i) conducting further inquiries into the impacts on healthcare needs of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds,
- (j) identifying culturally responsive forms of communication that contribute to the effective provision of a person's health care needs,
- (k) linking skilled migrants and others dwelling in Australia on temporary protection visas to humanitarian services, allowing access to HSP workers and other useful resources and information,
- (l) subsidising costs for in-house general practitioner services to incentivise migrants and immigrants to pursue accessible healthcare,
- (m) distributing online resources detailing the use of Medicare cards and encouraging migrants and immigrant individuals in the habit of renewing to limit unnecessary inaccessibility to healthcare providers, and
- (n) providing incentives for more female health practitioners and staff to practice in health centres located in highly multicultural communities to encourage women from migrant and immigrant backgrounds that discourage medical relations with male practitioners.

Part 5 Providing Housing Support For Migrant and Immigrant Families

Division 1 Accessibility of the housing market

9 Language barriers

A language barrier is evident in Australia and can often have a barrier in the rental and housing market and can impact first-time house buyers or renters that are new to Australia.

10 Cultural barriers

Housing markets operate differently everywhere in the world. We can't expect immigrants or migrants to know how the Australian housing market works if it works differently in their country.

11 Societal barriers

Houses cost money and there's already an employment crisis here in NSW — especially with the overpopulation in Australia. If we build more houses, we can supply more jobs which will help the employment aspect of immigration and migration of families.

12 Actions to assist migrant and immigrant families in housing market accessibility

The Government shall provide migrants and immigrants with information regarding the steps required to rent/purchase home; including support receiving a reference letter from their employer and how to go about that.

Division 2 Readdressing supply deficits and affordability

13 Availability of social and affordable housing

Over 60% of immigrants and migrants are in rental stress, which could be fixed by implementing more affordable housing.

14 Finding of affordable housing

Affordable housing is hard to find. The housing prices in Australia are skyrocketing—Australians already struggle with the price, and if we add more people to the equation, the pricing of houses will skyrocket due to demand.

15 Framework for access

To be able to qualify for a home buyers' scheme in NSW, you or your spouse must hold permanent Australian citizenship. How will immigrants or migrants be able to keep up with the demand for housing costs when they can't even apply for a home buyers' scheme?

Part 6 Education and Integration of Immigrants and Migrants Within the Workplace

16 Enhancing Job Accessibility

(1) The NSW Government shall work to implement a variety of measures to assist with the education and integration of immigrants and migrants within the workplace.

(2) This shall include—

- (a) providing information in the form of culturally competent case workers acting as brokers between national agencies, local authorities, and immigrants, thus bridging the missing link between government regulations at the national level and the delivery of services at the local level,
- (b) providing immigrants and migrants with incentives to take up jobs within particular labour sectors, mainly in rural and regional areas to balance the interests of Australia's growing economy and need for skilled labour worker,
- (c) structuring services that address the needs of *all* family members in order to retain highly skilled migrants' long term,

- (d) assisting with the search for housing, childcare, and schools if desired,
- (e) offering practical assistance with applications for work permits and registration with Australian tax authorities,
- (f) creating easily accessible online modules that introduce immigrants and migrants to living and working in Australian society, discussing working culture and professional habitus,
- (g) funding the resources of relocation agencies and their ability to relay local knowledge about the housing market, schools, the transportation system, provide awareness of relevant national policies and regulations, assist navigation through local administration structures and systems, and
- (h) providing immigrants and migrants with clear and accessible information regarding opportunities to further training and/or education such as TAFE, University, or registered training organisations.

Schedule 3 Dictionary

section 5

accessible means being able to be easily obtained or used.

allied health providers mean healthcare professionals providing services such as dietician, podiatrists, physiotherapists etc.

asylum seekers mean a person who has left their home country as a political refugee and is seeking asylum in another.

Australian cultural expectations A behaviour that is commonly accepted within Australian society that may not be similar/well known in other cultures.

Australian services and programs Australia-specific services and programs that people from other nations will be unfamiliar with (such as Medicare, Centrelink).

conditions of visa categories and subclasses Acknowledgement of various visa categories and the varying eligibility of people under these visas to certain services.

cultural sensitivity training the process of creating awareness among employees to appreciate and value each unique culture no matter from what background they are in.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Australia's population of people who were born overseas, have a parent born overseas or speak a variety of languages.

diversity understanding is an understanding towards differences that shape our community, such as ethnicity, gender, age, race, disability and sexual orientation.

employment incentives are a reward that inspires or motivates employees individually or collectively to accomplish certain tasks or reach specific goals.

immigrant is an individual who moves from one national border to another, with the intent to establish permanent residence.

migrant is an individual who moves or relocates from one national border to another, with the intent to establish superior living conditions, employment standards, health services and economic benefits.

migrating is to move to a new area or country in order to find work or better living conditions.

monopoly is the exclusive possession or control of the supply of or trade in a commodity or service.

multicultural affairs are a sub-government group that seeks to improve outcomes for people of diverse backgrounds.

multicultural means relating to or containing several cultural or ethnic groups within a society.

online forms of communication include social media, email, messaging, internet forums and web conferencing.

ostracisation is to exclude from a society or group.

refugee is a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.

society is the aggregate of people living together in an ordered community.

socio-cultural is the combining social and cultural factors.

socio-economic relates to or is concerned with the interaction of social and economic factors.

torture and refugee trauma are trauma related to war or persecution that may affect mental and physical health long after the events have occurred.

