



# **WE ARE MANY, BUT WE ARE ONE**

## **A SUBMISSION TO**

THE HON. SCOTT MORRISON, PRIME MINISTER OF THE  
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

AND

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION, CITIZENSHIP & MULTICULTURAL  
AFFAIRS

## **ON BEHALF OF**

PAKISTANIS IN AUSTRALIA

Pakistanis in Australia Inc. (PIAInc) is the peak body of Pakistanis living in Australia. This submission is based on wide interaction with community at large and comments received through personal communication with members from ethnic communities.



**Dr. Zarrin S Siddiqui**  
President  
26<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Pakistanis In Australia Inc. is an incorporated group to facilitate integration of Pakistani students and migrants in Australia. [www.piaincorporated.com](http://www.piaincorporated.com) @piainc  
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## INTRODUCTION

It is now almost six months that #Covid19 Pandemic disrupted our daily lives. Commonwealth of Australia has definitely reacted very promptly to contain the virus and minimize the damage through timely support to the permanent residents and citizens. Pakistanis in Australia being the peak advocacy body of migrants and students from Pakistan has been in touch with its members across all states and overseas to get insight into the issues faced.

The feedback received is reflected in this submission for action by appropriate authorities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **a. WITHDRAW DECISION REGARDING PAYMENT FOR THE QUARANTINE PERIOD**

The decision that all returning Australians will pay for quarantine needs to be revisited. There is a misperception that those who have not returned as yet have done it out of their own choice so have to face the consequences.

Here are some cases that will be treated unfairly in this case.

AD is working overseas on a contract so could not leave the job to return in March. The contract is now coming to an end. As there are no flights currently scheduled, every day overseas means financial stress. There are many interns and other employees in the same situation overseas who will struggle to pay.

If they would have come in March, they would be seeking job seeker payment from Centrelink.

BS is working overseas and did not come in March because of the health status. Pandemic was at its peak and there were more chances for the person to get affected with Covid19 virus.

MJ was on holidays with spouse and could not return because the budget airline they flew with stopped the flights to Australia. What seemed a lifetime holiday is now living in a horror dream with limited funds to buy expensive tickets to return home?

DF went to Pakistan due to a family emergency. Pakistan closed airspace without sufficient notice and there was no option to return. The nature of employment does not allow for working at home so was relieved from the job. DF wants to return to Australia but has no resources to pay for quarantine.

We understand that it has huge financial implications for the Federal and state governments as well as places available for quarantine. At the same time, there is now a cap on number of arrivals to Australia which can perhaps compensate for the financial cost regarding quarantine facilities. Simultaneously, many airlines have introduced mandatory testing for COVID19 within 96 hours of boarding the flight. Another option can be to allow self-nominated quarantine with serious consequences if an Australian failed to do so.

**b. DUAL CITIZENS SHOULD NOT REQUIRE AN EXEMPTION TO TRAVEL TO THEIR HOME COUNTRIES.**

Australia is perhaps the only country who is asking dual nationals to apply for an exemption, if they want to return to their homeland. This is inhumane. It is one thing if a person wants to go for holidays as many have done so in March. However, situation has changed drastically and Australia is still safest place to stay and provision of healthcare facilities is no match to many other countries.

The process of seeking exemption is stressful and there is a backlog of applications to respond. We have more than ten Pakistani families who need to travel urgently for three reasons.

- a. Death of a parent
- b. Critically ill family member
- c. Appearance before family court or some other legal issues requiring urgent attendance.

If a dual citizen wants to travel back to the home country, no exemption should be required and airline ticket issued to the place of destination with passport/national identification should be enough to allow exit from Australia.

**c. OFFER WAIVER FOR 90 DAY CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENTS IN 2020**

There is a clause in citizenship application which does not allow a prospective applicant for citizenship to stay overseas for more than 90 days. Due to #Covid19 Pandemic, many of these applicants are unable to return due to limited flight options. This means that permanent residents will not be eligible to apply for citizenship and have to wait for another year. We will request the Minister for Citizenship to consider the waiver of eligibility for the year 2020 as there is already a long wait for applicants after submission of application.

**d. REDUCE FEE FOR ONLINE STUDY OPTIONS**

We are grateful for the Commonwealth of Australia to announce that;

*Student visa holders studying online outside Australia due to COVID-19 will be able to use that study to count towards the Australian study requirement for a post-study work visa.*

However, the fees charged by the Universities is huge considering that students are not getting the experience they were offered at the time of admission. It is time for universities to offer fee reduction especially for students who are in their final semester of the year and would have graduated in 2020. A similar recommendation was proposed in our earlier submission by students.<sup>1</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

The four recommendations presented in this submission represent a wide section of community suffering in silence and should not be considered as specific to Pakistanis in Australia.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

We thank all members who have shared their experiences for us to convey to higher authorities. All the initials used to describe cases are fictitious and any resemblance to real names is purely coincidental. It remains without saying that the response to COVID19 has been amazing by all states and the federal government to which all of us are grateful and we aim to work together at all forums.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/PIAresponds> dated 28th March, 2020