

Racist Policies of new Conservative Oz government

by staff report via bill - RT *Monday, Dec 16 2013, 4:40pm*

international / prose / post

'Burden on Australia': Immigrant family fights deportation over son's autism

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The Kabir's pursuit of a better life in Australia from their native Bangladesh appears to be an immigration success story: Enamul Kabir is a doctor of mathematics and his wife, Siuly, is a doctor of biomedical engineering. Residents of Brisbane, they have lived in Australia for five years and never fail to pay their taxes, they say.

However, their eight-year-old son, Srijon, has been diagnosed with autism and for that reason the Kabirs may be sent packing back to Bangladesh.

Enamul and Siuly Kabir had their application for permanent residency turned down because their son Srijon's condition could "likely result in a significant cost to the Australian community in the areas of health care and community services," The Australian newspaper reported.

Enamul Kabir insists his son Srijon will not be a burden on Australia.

"The last report from the doctor mentioned he has moderate autism and is improving and also mentioned now he is getting support but in future may not need any support," Enamul Kabir told World News Australia (WNA).

"First of all he doesn't require any medication and therapy, [the] only support he requires is special schooling, and we are very happy to pay his special school fees if we get permanent residency," he said.

The Kabir's fear what will happen to Srijon if they are deported back to Bangladesh, where there is no special schooling or support for children with autism.

The possibility that Srijon - and other immigrant children like him - may require expensive, long-term medical care, paid for by taxpayer money, is exactly what Australian officials are seeking to avoid.

"Before somebody wants to migrate to Australia they have to prove they're not going to be a drain on our health system and a medical officer basically calculates how much this is going to cost our health system," said Dr Susan Harris-Rimmer of the Asia Pacific College of Diplomacy at the Australian National University.

“So the reason a lot of kids get caught is because they calculate it over their lifetime, and they don’t take into account whether you’re going to use the services or not.”

Once the medical care exceeds the 200 thousand dollar [Australian dollars = approximately 180,000 US dollars] threshold the amount of care is deemed “a burden” on Australia and the individual’s application to stay in the country is rejected.

However, many people say the office of Immigration Minister Scott Morrison should exercise extreme discretion in this case, considering that the Kabirs are contributing something positive to Australian society, as well as the economy.

The Kabirs are now awaiting a decision from Mr. Morrison, who can personally intervene on behalf of the family.

"There is discretion on the part of the minister that on the grounds of compassionate circumstances he can reverse the decision of the tribunal," Andrew Rouyanian, the lawyer representing the Kabirs, told The Australian. "Srijon has been here for five or so years. He's had the benefit of a special school and his doctors say his condition is improving. One doctor the family saw said if they were thrown out and sent back to Bangladesh, then he'll be lost for life."

A spokesperson for Morrison said the minister was "waiting for a submission to be prepared for his consideration" by the Immigration Department.

A 2010 parliamentary investigation into immigration recommended a “net benefit” test be used in cases like the Kabirs, including what skills the migrants can offer.

Immigration policy has become a hot topic in Australia, which has become a popular destination for asylum seekers. In fact, the problem is so bad that Australia last month gave Sri Lanka a gift of two patrol boats to aid its efforts in stopping refugees heading to Australia.

‘Not a burden to society’

Enamul Kabir, who is employed at the University of Queensland, says he has contributed a fair share to Australia during his time in the country.

“When I came here as a student I was working as an associate lecturer at the University of Southern Queensland, and for more than the last two years I’m working full-time [sic], I’m paying tax to the government,” he said.

“For example in the last financial year I paid \$18,000 in tax, so yes I’m contributing to the economy of this country and as well I’m helping researchers, students and academics who need help with statistics, so I’m contributing in that way as well.”

The Kabirs hope their professional skills, which are in short supply at present in Australia, will be an incentive to the government to allow them to remain in the country.

“At the moment there is a really big reliance of foreign workers, we really need to build up the skills in Australia, and meet that with domestic supply, but at the moment we need the supply internationally,” Professor Kerrie Mengersen, the former president of the Statistical Society of Australia, told WNA.

“So there’s a huge demand in Australia because there’s [sic] industries and businesses that realize

they need data analysis, modeling, prediction, the advent of big data, different kinds of data, and there's not enough people coming through from universities and schools doing good maths and stats," the professor added.

The Kabir family's plight made headlines when a former colleague of Enamul Kabir, Christine McDonald, created a petition on the website change.org. In four weeks it has attracted 24,000 signatures. At the time of writing (Saturday December 14), it was just 100 signatures shy of the 25,000 needed to qualify as a petition to the government.

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