

Dear Commissioners,

This email constitutes a formal submission to this public inquiry, and is limited to comments regarding suggestions for nannies from Indonesia or other developing countries to be granted easier access to visas to undertake childcare duties.

As an Australian father of a child living in Indonesia and being familiar with Indonesian nannies, I feel I am in a position to comment.

I would strongly advise against relaxing visa requirements so that Indonesian nannies can more easily work with Australian families, and I will explain my reasons below.

Given I'm the father of a Eurasian child, I think I can safely say my opposition to relaxing requirements for nannies from Indonesia or other developing countries is not racially based, as in fact often is the case with people who oppose movements of people into Australia.

My opposition is more based on the risk for children I think the gross social inequality in Indonesia (and likely other developing countries) indirectly creates. Indonesia has a wealthy elite and a vast multitude without any realistic hope of improving their difficult economic circumstances. Nannies, a low status occupation, invariably come from poor disempowered families, and for reasons I'll explain in my view they're frequently a significant risk to children they have unsupervised access to.

I would no more allow an Indonesian nanny unsupervised access to my child than fly to the moon. Poor Indonesians are substantially powerless and in entrenched poverty which is ultimately emotionally destructive for the majority of people over time. Nannies can and will take this out on children, in the form of abuse of various kinds - not that most do, but many certainly do if given unsupervised contact and if they think they can get away with it.

Going to Australia to earn substantially more money is of course the chance in a lifetime for these women, and I would expect the majority would be on their best behaviour for this reason - however, a significant minority couldn't restrain their in some ways understandable reactions to the inequality of their personal circumstances and history and would abuse children.

People growing up in Australia and Western countries in general are used to the notion that child abuse is taken very seriously and the state will come down like a ton of bricks on people who are abusive in any way to a child. It's not like that in Indonesia - it's really up to families (often depending on power and wealth) and often religiously-integrated communities to protect children, with the state realistically is absolutely on the sidelines given it's budgetary constraints compared with the very large number of citizens it is required to serve. I think this means in general the culture in Indonesia is less protective of children, and I think that would logically lead to an increased risk of abuse by Indonesian nannies relative to Australian (and probably Western) nannies.

Most of the women who would potentially be nannies in Australia wouldn't have criminal records in Indonesia regardless of whether they'd acted abusively to children, but even if they did considering their potential income in Australia someone would be willing to provide a loan for them to pay a bribe to get them a clean criminal records check if that's what was needed.

In summary, I personally think the child protection risks of making it easy for Indonesian nannies to work as child carers in Australia are substantial and not capable of satisfactory mitigation.

Regards,

Neil Ashton.