



**Senator Malcolm Roberts**  
One Nation Senator for Queensland

27 August 2020

Hon Peter Dutton MP  
Minister for Home Affairs  
PO Box 6022  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

I write in support of Mr Martin Thomson and his son Harry's application for an exemption from the overseas travel ban to travel from Australia to Scotland. Separately, and without impinging on that request, I ask the government to adopt a more supportive approach to persons wishing to travel from Australia.

**Mr Martin Thomson**

I am informed of the following:

Martin Thomson is a UK National with permanent residency in Australia. I believe it is important to note that Mr Thomson is a non-citizen trying to leave Australia. Mr Thomson's father, James, is in Scotland and has prostate cancer. James is on treatment for his cancer and does not know how long he has to live. Mr Thomson's mother, Susanna, is unable to drive and has arthritis which makes caring for James very difficult. Mr Thomson wishes to leave the country with his son to care for and see his father, in what may be the final stages of his life.

Mr Thomson has booked a one-way flight back to the UK for both him and his son, has resigned from his workplace in Australia and will be freighting his belongings in Australia back to the UK. He understands the quarantine requirements in the UK upon arrival, due to his stopover in Dubai, and has undertaken to comply with them fully.

I have seen handwritten letters from Mr Thomson's parents pleading for our government's compassion on this issue. Susanna writes, "... my arthritis is making everything harder! I do need them home very badly! To help!" Heartbreakingly, 80 year old James writes, "I do not know how long I have to live and as you can imagine I am in my later years, I would dearly love to see my son and grandson back home in Scotland before I pass on out of this life".

I struggle to think of circumstances that deserve our compassion as much as the one Mr Thomson finds himself in. We are Australians and we pride ourselves on fairness. Allowing people to leave this country to take care of dying family members is the absolute least we can do to live up to that pride.

I ask and encourage in the sincerest terms possible that the Government consider favourably the applications of Mr Thomson and his son, and also any others who find themselves in similar circumstances.

### **Let people leave**

Separately to my support of Mr Thomson and his son's application, I wish to request that the government relax its restrictions on people exiting the country. Many Australians are not aware the government has currently banned them from leaving the country without a permit.

I understand that of the more than 90,000 applications made to leave the country from 25 March to 31 July, Australian Border Force has approved 22,640, around only 1 in 4. As far as we know, Australia is the only liberal democracy in the world with a blanket ban on citizens, let alone non-citizens, leaving the country.

We have heard of people being refused exemptions to leave the country to return to where they hold citizenship, to see a daughter's marriage and, in the case of Mr Thomson, to care for his dying father.

The only justification presented for this ban on leaving the country has been that if we let people out, they might come back one day. The outgoing travel ban was implemented at a time when states and territories were picking up the bill for hotel quarantine. However, this is no longer the case. Taxpayers are not footing the bill and anyone leaving the country understands they will personally pay up to \$3,000 for hotel quarantine if they choose to return.

I suggest that this request is reasonable given the Government is considering welcoming international visitors who are prepared to quarantine and is already trialling bringing in international students. No comparable countries to Australia, such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Canada, the United States of America and others have this restriction on departures in place.

We must manage the risk of COVID-19 not by preventing Australians from leaving but controlling their return to Australia as well as foreign arrivals into Australia. We already control the return of people to Australia with user-pay hotel quarantine.

The current policy regarding leaving Australia is causing a great deal of unnecessary heartbreak and is an unjustified infringement of liberty. I ask the government to reconsider its current approach to the prohibition on departures from Australia and to adopt a much more compassionate and practical approach.

Yours sincerely



**Senator Malcolm Roberts**  
Senator for Queensland