



Petition 2011/97 of Kyle Lockwood

Report of the Government Administration
Committee

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Petition 2011/97 of Kyle Lockwood

Recommendation

The Government Administration Committee recommends to the Government that it review the validity period of passports.

Background

The Government Administration Committee has considered Petition 2011/97 of Kyle Lockwood requesting that

the House repeal section 5(1) of the Passports Act 1992, as is currently enacted, and substitute it with the original text of the Act as enacted in 1992 (No 92) and repeal without replacement section 8 of the Passport Amendment Act 2005 and by doing so reintroduce ten-year passports for New Zealanders.

The petition proposes that the Government change the validity period of New Zealand passports back to ten years.

In April 2005, the validity period of the adult New Zealand passport was changed from ten years to five years to minimise the risk of counterfeiting and identity fraud. Later that year the Department of Internal Affairs began issuing new biometric passports, which are considered to be more secure and difficult to counterfeit.

However, the production costs of the new passports were high and the cost of the passport more than doubled. New Zealand passport services operate on a cost-recovery principle, but by June 2012, the Passport Memorandum Account had a surplus of \$27.37 million. In response the Government directed that the fees be set below production costs to reduce the surplus.

Evidence from the Department of Internal Affairs

The Department of Internal Affairs told us that five-year passports are the international standard. The International Civil Aviation Organisation, an international organisation concerned with international civil aviation policies and standards, recommends that for security purposes passports should ideally be redesigned and replaced every five years, but it considers a ten-year validity period acceptable. Since 2009 the number of fraudulent passports detected has fallen. The department submitted that reintroducing ten-year passports would encourage criminal organisations to invest in counterfeiting the New Zealand passport.

It said that reverting to ten-year passports would also increase their price. People who use their passport only once in ten years would thus get proportionately less value from the ten-year passport. The department said that a reversion would also lead to a revenue problem, as there would be a five-year period when only a small number of passports would be processed.

Evidence from the petitioner

Mr Lockwood told us that most of the members of the OECD and most of our major trading partners issue ten-year passports. These countries include Australia, the United

States of America, the United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, Italy, France, Ireland, Japan, Norway, Spain, Austria, and Switzerland. The petitioner also submitted that China, Canada, and the Netherlands have moved back from five-year to ten-year passports.

We heard that the new biometric passports reduce the risks of counterfeiting and identity fraud to such a degree that the validity period could safely be extended. Mr Lockwood suggested that if the new biometric passports are secure enough for most of the members of the OECD then they must be sufficiently secure for New Zealand.

We understand that the cost of transferring a visa from one passport to another is also a valid reason for ten-year passports, and might partially offset the increased cost of the passport itself.

Conclusion

On the evidence received, we are not convinced that the reduction in detected fraudulent passports is a result of the shorter validity period. It seems more likely to us that the introduction of biometric passports has lessened fraud and counterfeiting. The international standard among countries such as Australia, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, who use similar biometric passports, is ten years. The biometric security features have led countries such as China, Canada and the Netherlands to reintroduce ten-year passports. We support the intent of the petition.

Appendix

Committee procedure

The petition was referred to the committee on 4 December 2013. The committee met between 12 February and 28 May 2014 to hear evidence and consider the petition.

Committee members

Hon Ruth Dyson (Chairperson)

Chris Auchinvole

Kanwaljit Singh Bakshi

Mojo Mathers

Hon Trevor Mallard

Eric Roy