



MEDIA RELEASE

It is time for John Key to stand up for New Zealand

Oz Kiwi is dismayed by the comments made by John Key over the previous week regarding the situation of New Zealanders in Australia.

While Mr Key has said he will mention the matter to Tony Abbott, he has ruled out pushing for a resolution of the issues New Zealanders in Australia face. He has signalled to Australia that there will be no consequences for continuing to treat New Zealanders poorly. He has effectively admitted defeat on this issue before the meeting has even begun.

We are beginning to wonder what would prompt Mr Key to stand up for New Zealanders.

The Productivity Commission has given a firm recommendation for Australia to improve its treatment of New Zealanders, but he won't push for it to be acted on.

Australia's Parliamentary Human Rights Committee has begun investigating whether Australia is breaching its international human rights obligations to New Zealanders, yet Mr Key maintains Australia has a 'sovereign right' to treat New Zealanders however it wishes.

Former Howard Government citizenship minister Gary Hardgrave has admitted on national television that the 2001 changes were racially motivated. However, the response from the Key Government has been a deafening silence. Apparently, Mr Key does not care if Australia racially targets certain New Zealand citizens.

All we hear instead from Mr Key is an attempt to shift the blame for the current predicament onto the Labour Party. Again and again, he insists that Helen Clark made an agreement with John Howard to strip New Zealanders of their rights.

We have seen no evidence to suggest there was any such agreement. If one really exists, we wonder why Mr Key does not simply terminate it. In allowing such an agreement to continue, he would be in apparent breach of the Human Rights Act 1993.

While Mr Key is correct in saying he cannot force Australia's hand, as Prime Minister of New Zealand he should be forcefully pressing the case for change. He would have no shortage of evidence or credible backing to support his case. There are also a number of reasonable proposals he could present that would be fair to all parties involved.

A resolution of this issue is in the interests of both countries. Both Australia and New Zealand benefit from a strong trans-Tasman relationship. However, the long-term stability of the relationship is threatened if it goes unresolved. As New Zealand is tied closer and closer to Australia, the poor treatment of its citizens will become increasingly incongruous. New Zealanders will inevitably begin to question the wisdom of partnering with a nation that does not treat them

as equals.

At some point this issue will have to come to a head. It is much better to resolve it now than to leave it to cause lasting damage to the relationship.

A failure to address this issue could all too easily result in the stagnation of trans-Tasman integration or even the collapse of the single market as we know it. The costs of this to businesses and governments would be incalculable.

It is time for John Key to stand up for New Zealand and for a fair and sustainable trans-Tasman relationship.

All enquiries should be directed to:

Timothy Gassin
media@ozkiwi2001.org
+61 3 9347 2506