



Media Release

Senator Alan Eggleston

**Liberal Senator for Western Australia
Chair of the Senate Economics References Committee**

Sofocado cancer case needs compassion, quick action

27 April 2011

The plight of Dr Cesar Sofocado and his family to remain in Australia and receive a permanent resident visa on compassionate grounds must be urgently considered, says West Australian Senator Alan Eggleston.

“Dr Sofocado has served as a much-needed doctor in regional WA for the past six years, and yet his wife Mary is terminally ill with breast and brain cancer and the Department of Immigration is considering sending the family home to the Phillipines. It’s outrageous.”

Dr Sofocado was told by the Department of Immigration that a permanent residency application, begun before his wife’s diagnosis, would be rejected because of her terminal illness.

“Being told by a case officer that divorce or separation is the only solution under their subclass 176 application is cruel and inhumane, and the stress this family must be under is incalculable,” Senator Eggleston said.

“As I understand it, an administrative error has meant the Sofocado’s visa category does not allow an appeal against a rejection due to health matters. This needs to be fixed to allow the visa application to be reclassified to permit an appeal.”

After receiving an email from Dr Cesar Sofocado, Senator Eggleston sent a letter to federal Minister for Immigration Chris Bowen, asking that Dr Sofocado’s plea for a permanent visa to be considered on compassionate grounds.

“Reading the Letters to the Editor in today’s West, it is obvious that many West Australian’s are embarrassed and shamed at the lack of response and action from the Department of Immigration.

“This is a family who answered our call for help with regional healthcare, and have been given no help in return.

“North West doctors already live and work under trying conditions — this definitely won’t help with the recruiting drive,” Senator Eggleston said.

Dr Sofocado is currently a GP at the Ellenbrook Medical Centre and has previously worked in places such as Geraldton, Karratha, Dampier and Dalyellup.

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