

Let our sheik stay - council

BIANCA MARTINS

SHEIK Mansour Leghaei, his wife Marzeih and their son Mohammad Ali will remain in Australia for another two weeks after Immigration Minister Senator Chris Evans extended their bridging visas last week.

Dr Leghaei told the *Express* he met up with Immigration department officials, who told him the minister would make his final decision on Monday, May 3.

"Right from the beginning I have been very positive. I have never doubted this case," he said.

"But for my son Ali it's tearing his university studies apart.

"He is really affected by this and he is thinking of dropping one of his subjects because he can't concentrate.

"He doesn't know if he will stay. He's an international student and has already paid for this semester but not knowing whether he will finish uni, it's really taking a toll on him."

The cleric, who heads the Imam Husain Islamic Centre in Earlwood, faced deportation last month following ASIO's assessments that he carried out "acts of foreign interference".

While he admitted his centre was granted \$32,000 in 1999 from the then Iranian president

Council support

CANTERBURY Council will write to Immigration Minister Chris Evans to express the community's support of Sheik Mansour Leghaei.

Cr Linda Eisler moved an "emergency motion" at last week's council meeting in a bid to allow him to stay in Australia.

Mayor Robert Furolo said it was not the council's job to "entertain" the Federal Government's role but backed the motion because of the community's strong support of Dr Leghaei.

Cr Eisler said ASIO's concerns with him were "trite and questionable".

Cr Michael Hawatt said he was surprised at the motion but also supported Dr Leghaei.

Mohammad Khatami, he said he never asked for the money and has not had any contact with the Iranian Government.

"They never asked us for any favours in return," he said.

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