

I wish to make a submission to the Committee on the behalf of the Skilled Migration Growth Group (SMGG). The SMGG are a group of independent industry representative bodies who have concerns regarding skill shortages in South Australia and how this impacts the local economy. A copy of members is attached.

Whilst submissions may be received independently by individual industry groups, we have found that collectively we have a number of common concerns, those being,

1. The lack of industry consultation when identifying occupations in demand and skill shortages,
2. The use of historical data used to compile lists of occupations in demand, and,
3. The lack of industry involvement during policy discussions regarding the South Australian migration program.

The SMGG request the opportunity to appear before the Committee to further explain our position and how we believe the State program could be structured to achieve a better outcome, specifically targeted at addressing those occupations deemed to be in demand now and into the future.

We contend that the future of the State migration program needs to be specifically focused on those occupations deemed to be most in demand, rather than towards generic occupations that will be of little or no benefit to the South Australian economy.

For your information I have attached a copy of the SMGG submission made to the Immigration SA and the Department of Trade and Economic Development which articulates the concerns that are collectively shared by SMGG members.

The SMGG have made numerous approaches to State Government, relevant Ministers and the Premier, yet despite this, all requests for a round table discussion have been dismissed.

Regrettably, despite having access to up to date data about specific industry groups and current and forecasted demands – we receive responses, such as the most recent received today from Mr. Lance Worrell claiming that the State Government and those involved have got this matter under control.

Unfortunately, this is not the case. My experience in the migration profession has shown that as a State we under achieve when it comes to our “fair share” of the migration program. This maybe explained by the fact that those people, Government Departments, industry bodies and Industry Skills Boards listed in Mr. Worrall’s letter only have peripheral knowledge of the nuances and complexity of the Australian migration system. The fact that the State Government does not wish to consult with those with specific industry knowledge who operate at the coal face, demonstrates a cursory approach to the subject.

It is contended that if those currently charged with the responsibility of addressing skill shortages through opportunities available via the migration program were doing a good job, then skill shortages would not exist in South Australia and we would achieve an overall greater share of the migration program.

Historical data compiled by DFEEST regarding occupations in demand is based on advertised vacancies. These lists are then used by DTED to compile lists of occupations in demand. It is contended that these lists of occupations are flawed as they do not take into account all vacancies, only those which are advertised in some print and electronic media.

Responses received from senior State Government delegates appear to insinuate that recommendations regarding changes to State and Federal Government policies regarding immigration are being made to benefit those who operate in the migration and education sector. Statements such as this concern me greatly, as they have no basis or merit whatsoever. My approach to the State Government is to highlight concerns that I have with

the way that current policy is being developed and the impact that poor policy will continue to have on South Australia.

Skill shortages and the impact this has on local businesses is a concern that I have held for many years. It is of significant concern that our local immigration policy is being steered or influenced by Federal policy and not based on what skills are actually in demand in South Australia or what is best for local employers. The removal of the Regional 457 program, including the use of ASCO 5-7 occupations, withdrawing regional market salary concessions and the removal of the wider use of ASCO 1 to 4 occupations is one such example.

Further to this, it is contended that the State Government has failed to consult sufficiently with industry in order to be able to make proactive changes to State policy or to be in a position to make recommendations to the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, rather preferring to base policy and recommendations on historical data.

With regards to population targets as set in the State Strategic Plan, it is contended that the use of temporary entrants should not be used to calculate overall population trends as temporary visas such as students, the 457 program and working holiday makers tend to skew statistics.

The SMGG contend that Government and Industry need to work together, proactively to address long term trends regarding South Australia's workforce and how migration can be used to top up and assist with local demands, especially in regional South Australia.

Issues such as the selection and retention of skilled migrants needs to be addressed to ensure that we are capitalising on outcomes of our migration program.

The SMGG will be happy to submit more up to date and relevant data regarding skills in demand and how they may differ from South Australia's Skilled Migration Plan when this list is released. Of great concern is the issues facing the restaurant and baking industry. Ongoing changes to the migration program affecting these sectors of the market are causing significant issues to businesses that work in these areas. I contend that there is irrefutable evidence of the demand faced in these areas, yet State Government policy does little to acknowledge, support or address skill shortages being experienced by this sector of the market.

The SMGG will be happy to release copies of all correspondence sent and received specifically relating to our concerns regarding South Australia's migration program – which includes skilled migration and the temporary and permanent employer sponsored migration.

Due to the varying dynamics the migration program and the frequent changes, I have not presented any policy based discussions as this is likely to change prior to the SMGG having an opportunity to meet with the committee.

Further information specific to that outlined in the enquiry document will be forwarded to the committee under separate cover.

Kind Regards,

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