



SCOA submission: Proposal Paper: Simplification of the skilled migration and temporary activity visa programmes

The Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA) is pleased to provide this submission to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection on the Proposal Paper: Simplification of the skilled migration and temporary activity visa programmes. SCOA represents over 80 agencies in the settlement sector, which comprise the majority of agencies involved in funded settlement programs including Settlement Grants Program (SGP), Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS), Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) and Complex Case Support (CCS). SCOA members are involved in providing settlement support to recently arrived migrants and people of refugee background across Australia. SCOA's consultation with members and our research into the area have informed the preparation of this submission.

SCOA supports efforts to simplify what can be complex processes such as visa applications and reduce red tape. Broadly the measures outlined in the Proposal Paper should clarify visas, make application processes less difficult and reduce the time and complexity associated with obtaining a visa.

A consistent recommendation from the settlement sector in relation to migrants is that migrants are provided with settlement support. Many migrants who come to Australia are well able to plan for their migration and settlement. However the benefits of support in the early days in getting to know the new area, learning the ropes in the job market and acclimatising to Australian cultural norms are evident in better employment outcomes, quicker and more effective settlement and greater integration and contribution to the Australian community.

Of concern to SCOA is ensuring that refugees and migrants resident in Australia are not disadvantaged with respect to employment opportunities from prospective temporary visa initiatives such as the 457 visa. While this visa is critical to developing Australia's scientific and commercial expertise, semi skilled and low-skilled jobs can successful be done by the current and future pool of migrants and refugees already residing in Australia. Employment agencies need to work more closely with the settlement sector to attract and retain new settlers in non- skilled and semi skilled jobs where this is possible.

The global trends discussed in the Proposal Paper highlighting the trends towards temporary migration also require provision of early support. It is in the interests of the community that all resident in the community, be they temporary or permanent, are able to fully participate and contribute. Supporting temporary migration, and making greater provision for migrants and their families will also make Australia a more attractive destination.

Within the visa framework we believe it is important that there are structural and programmatic responses to support sustainable rather than temporary regional migration whether through direct migration or resettlement through work opportunities. Regional migration has been and remains important in maintaining the strength and vitality of regional Australia.