



14th January, 2011

Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA)

Submission into Australia's Migration Program 2011 – 2012

This submission should be read as an adjunct to SCoA's submission to DIAC on the Humanitarian Program 2011 – 2012, and SCoA's Submission on Employment Participation to the Hon Kate Ellis MP, Minister for Employment Participation. Unfortunately due to the timing of this submission SCoA has had limited dialogue with its membership. In a poll of SCoA executive members it was noted that around 50% of the relevant settlement staff that would inform this response were on leave. For those members that were not on leave their focus was on retaining their SGP funding through the application process. The SCoA is presently developing its consultation strategy to inform policy development with its membership. We would welcome the opportunity of engaging with the Department on these important matters should the opportunity arise in the coming year.

The SCoA is generally in agreement with the government's current policy settings in terms of the size of Australia's Migration Program. We suggest that consideration needs to be given to the composition of the current program to align this with Australian values centred on the family, equity for all residents in terms of eligibility to rights and entitlements, and to maintain the integrity of the program within the government's overall population and economic strategies.

Humanitarian Program

We are keen to ensure the integrity of the current Humanitarian Program, by expanding the program to allocate additional number of places for on-shore asylum seekers, while at the same time balancing the needs and number of humanitarian category priorities

As importantly for this group is the resourcing of a highly professional and responsive settlement program to ensure optimum settlement outcomes that promote the integrity of the Humanitarian Program

SCoA's submission to DIAC into the Humanitarian Program provides more detail on this migration category

Family Re-union

It is the experience of the SCoA membership that family re-union has over many years netted successful outcomes for the migration program in terms of economic, civic and cultural participation. Because of economic barriers this category currently favours families from western cultures and economies and does not provide for the re-union of families who are not in a position to support themselves in the first two years.

The Family re-union program has over a number of years been drastically reduced to the detriment of many new communities of third wave post war migrants. SCoA favours the expansion of this program.

Skilled Migration

There continues to be great angst in regional areas about the 457 visa category, especially for visa holders with low levels skills and English language proficiency. The integrity of the Migration Program is based on equity for all residents and workers in terms of theirs and their children's entitlements to health, education, training and other industrial and social conditions we as Australian's take for granted.

Skilled migration has been and continues to be a flexible and immediate way in which Australia can assist its economic development and support targeted expanding industry sectors. The integrity of the program is dependent on Australia up-skilling its own workforce and ensuring training and career pathways for its youth and women. Additionally at risk groups, eg humanitarian entrants, those with disabilities, young people and women at risk need to be assisted to enter into training and sustainable and safe work.

Stakeholder specific needs and issues

The SCoA is concerned that strategies are put in place for a meaningful interface between industry, commonwealth, state and settlement and employment and training NGOs to maximise communication, and for sharing the impact that skilled migration has on other migration categories, especially the Humanitarian Program in terms of policy development and program implementation.

A more effective nexus between Regional Development Australia, Job Employment Australia and the settlement sector is an urgent priority

The SCoA Submission on Employment to the Minister for Employment Participation provides more detail regarding specific stakeholder needs.

Sincerely



Cedric Manen – SCoA Chair