



**CORANGAMITE
SHIRE**

18 September 2019

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Inquiry into Migration in Regional Australia

I am writing this submission as the Acting Director Sustainable Development for Corangamite Shire Council located in south-west Victoria.

This submission has not formally been considered by Council and has been prepared by Council officers. As part of the submission to the Joint Standing Committee Inquiry I make the following comments.

Locally

Corangamite Shire is predominantly a rural area, with significant residential areas in the townships of Camperdown, Cobden, Derrinallum, Lismore, Noorat, Port Campbell, Princetown, Simpson, Skipton, Terang and Timboon. The major town is Camperdown, followed by Cobden and Terang.

The Shire encompasses a total land area of about 4,400 square kilometres, including national park, coastline, lakes and craters. Much of the rural area is used for agriculture, particularly dairy farming, sheep and cattle grazing, and grain growing. Tourism is also an important industry, especially in the southern section along the Great Ocean Road which includes the world famous Twelve Apostles amongst other spectacular coastal locations.

Our Shire has very low unemployment numbers (currently at 2.4%) which although presents as a low number, creates a lot of other issues for our Shire around recruiting, retaining and growing our labour force.

Local employers are continually struggling to attract staff as we experience little to no population growth. This coupled with the leakage of younger residents (15-25 years old) where they leave to complete further study or training and don't return, is creating a growing issue around attracting suitably qualified staff to allow businesses in our Shire to grow.

Due to these reasons, Council has commenced a pilot program with Diversitat, specialists in regional settlement services to assist families to migrate to our Shire. This is to help address the current labour shortage mentioned above and in anticipation of the growth in jobs predicted through the construction of two major tourism resorts in the south of Corangamite Shire along the Great Ocean Road (200-300 ongoing full-time jobs).

CORANGAMITE SHIRE COUNCIL

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Home Base will be a twelve-month pilot project that will see Corangamite Shire partnering with Diversitat to resettle 20 people and their families to the Shire to take up employment with some of the small businesses struggling to get staff.

It will pilot resettlement and employment processes for new arrivals in Australia. The findings will inform future settlement strategies with a focus on housing, inclusion and employment outcomes. The *Home Base* pilot will commence in 2019 and leverage off the Diversitat Multi-Cultural Jobs Fair.

Council has committed funding to this pilot which will see the employment of a staff member to work on the program helping with the recruitment and settlement of people as part of the program. This role will also look to:

- Assist employers to access skilled labour.
- Help identify jobs required for the pilot program.
- Work with employers to access various visa programs.
- Unlock jobs that employers have given up trying to recruit for.
- Promote the Shire through the creation of new promotional material aimed at attracting migrants to the Shire/region.

This work is all considered critical to commence now with the new tourism developments about to start construction in our Shire.

Regionally

The Great South Coast Group is a formal alliance of local government, business and community partners working towards a more prosperous, equitable, sustainable and liveable Great South Coast region.

Encompassing the Shires of Corangamite, Moyne, Southern Grampians, Glenelg and Warrnambool, the Great South Coast Group's key cities and towns include Warrnambool, Port Fairy, Camperdown, Portland and Hamilton.

The region is blessed with a beautiful natural environment and internationally recognised iconic tourism assets including the Shipwreck Coast's Great Ocean Road, the 12 Apostles and the Grampians National Park.

Given that all these Councils in the Great South Coast Group are suffering from similar types of labour force issues, a variety of projects are being undertaken at a regional level to help drive population and migration. Projects Corangamite Shire is involved in include:

- In October 2018, the group decided to support the Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA) proposal presented by Warrnambool City Council on behalf of the GSC Group. The initial focus was on food processing, dairy, tourism and agriculture sectors which has subsequently been approved and is being implemented. The DAMA provides a pathway for permanent citizenship for migrants who become part of the program.
- Additionally, a broader project was presented entitled Designated Workforce Project to present a cohesive narrative around our workforce and population shortages. Whilst much work has been undertaken to date little support has been received directly from State or Federal Government to progress this initiative.
- A Victorian Planning Authority housing strategy study is being completed between the Council's along the Great Ocean Road (Surf Coast, Colac Otway, Corangamite and Moyne) to try and identify ways to create more affordable housing, for workers especially in the hospitality and tourism areas, along the Great Ocean Road.

Next Steps

The projects that Council would like to see increased government support for, that we believe will assist in driving regional migration include:

- Secure direct resources into local government to support re-settlement programs such as the one Council is about to commence with Diversitat;
- Work closely with Warrnambool City Council to secure resources to support the further establishment and growth of the DAMA;
- Work with regional education and skills providers along with employment placement and support agencies to identify, collate and improve visibility of job vacancies across the region;
- Work with Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victorian Multicultural Commission and appropriate agencies and providers to develop a model and package of support services into the region focussed on secondary migration and retention;
- Influence and support policy changes to improve the delivery and visibility of migration support and settlement services into the region;
- Work with regional education and skills providers to improve overseas student transition into employment through job placements, permanent residency and support services;
- Develop marketing and promotional collateral into major centres targeting secondary migration;
- Link to work currently underway by Council's in our region on housing availability and strategies to address lack of residential housing in our townships.
- Develop a Regional Victoria Workforce attraction fund to enable funding of the individual projects as they are further developed and leveraging of resources is required.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission into this inquiry and would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of the programs or projects I have mentioned further.

Yours sincerely

Rory Neeson
Acting Director Sustainable Development