



Australian Government

Australian Multicultural Council

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

Inquiry into the New Skilled Regional Visas (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2019 [Provisions]

On behalf of the Australian Multicultural Council (the Council), I would like to thank the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee for inviting the Council to make a submission to the *Inquiry into the New Skilled Regional Visas (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2019 [Provisions]*.

The Council is a ministerially-appointed body that provides independent advice to Government on multicultural affairs, social cohesion and integration policy and programs. The Council has a particular focus on:

- Strengthening public understanding of a shared 'Australian identity' as a unifying characteristic of Australia.
- Harnessing the economic and social benefits of our diverse population.
- Advancing programs and policies aimed at building harmonious and social cohesive communities.
- Promoting the importance of mutual respect and responsibility, which foster our shared Australian values, identity, and citizenship.
- Building stronger and more cohesive communities and addressing barriers to participation, including racism and discrimination.
- Promoting greater intercultural and interfaith understanding and dialogue.

The Council notes the need for a comprehensive regional policy to support the settlement of migrants in rural and regional communities, ensuring not only employment but the right employment, as well as strong futures for children of migrants in regional Australia.

The Council endorses the findings of the toolkit developed by the Regional Australia Institute in 2019, *'Steps to Settlement Success: A Toolkit for Rural and Regional Communities'*. The toolkit was developed to respond to the information needs of rural and regional communities looking to settle migrants locally, be they migrants coming in from big Australian cities or overseas, entrants to Australia on skilled working visas or on humanitarian grounds. The toolkit identifies best practice for regional settlement and outlines the key players and areas for action underpinning regional settlement success.

The toolkit outlines the 7 building blocks of settlement success:

1. Initiating a settlement strategy
2. Organising and consulting local Community
3. Welcoming and hosting new migrants
4. Securing employment for new migrants
5. Securing housing for new migrants
6. Fostering community cohesion
7. Considering culture, customs and environment

In particular, the Council would like to highlight the findings of the sixth building block, fostering community cohesion. The toolkit recommends that local volunteers and community organisations with support from the steering committee and local business, must remain active in supporting new migrants to become part of the community. Similarly, new residents should engage in the whole life of the community, including events, sports activities, and local clubs and associations. New residents may also benefit socially from having migrant peers and enrolling their children in the same schools.

As Chair of the Council, I would be available to provide evidence to support this submission, if required.

The Council looks forward to the Committee's findings.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Dr Sev Ozdowski AM OAM FRSN
Chair

23 September 2019
