

I am writing to register our concern about the proposed changes to the Australian immigration programme and specifically the plan to enable previously lodged visa applications to be scrapped.

We have been in the visa process since February 2008 (475, family sponsored), when in good faith we paid a considerable sum of money to an agent and the Australian government to lodge an application based on the rules and points system that were in place. Over the subsequent year, despite this being prior to the economic downturn, the speed of processing applications was dire, and we had progressed no further down the immigration track despite the estimated time of processing being 7 months. It is now 2 1/2 years down the line and we have been hoping that our patience will pay off, whilst fully understanding the implications of the economic downturn and how this would change priorities. It seems that immigration issues predate the recent economic events and that we are to suffer the fact that the structure and process was not sorted out in September 2007 when vast numbers of applicants with insufficient English skills flooded the system.

Since the recent changes in priority processing, I have even completed a back to nursing course and IELTS assessment to hopefully help us with our visa application; however due to current legislation I cannot add these to our existing application. I have just turned 45 and unless you change the age limits, will be unable to lodge a new application and now face our existing one being cancelled.

I have a brother and sister in law who are Australian citizens having settled for 7 years and an Aunt and cousins who emigrated in 1960's. We have also visited the country twice and know that this is where we want to settle. We feel we can contribute something to the country. However it seems that despite our commitment to this process, the Australian government does not want people like us, or does not seem to be able to offer a route. We are bundled into the group that are consistently referred to "chefs and cooks". I have worked in professional and skilled employment for 24 years and have made considerable sacrifices to try and help our application to Australia.

Please consider people like us before you pass this change to the immigration laws.

For us, simply being able to amend the skills/job against our current application that was lodged when I was 42 would enable us to move forward. I know that we may be a rare case, but I am sure there are other people who have committed a lot to this process and are genuine applicants who could contribute to Australia.

Thank you for enabling us to lodge our views as part of this process.

Helen Lee