



Tasmania

PREMIER

12 SEP 2002

Hon Teresa Gambaro, MP  
Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Migration  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

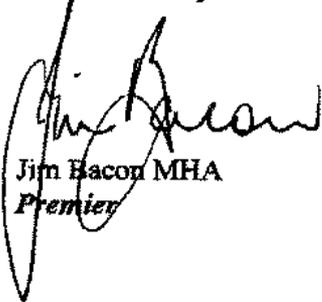
Dear Ms Gambaro

**Review of Australia's Skilled Labour Migration and Temporary Entry Programs**

I refer to your letter of 26 June, 2002 requesting a submission on the above review. I apologise for the delay in replying, but this was due to the fact that Tasmania has just held elections. I understand your office was informed that for this reason, our comments would be delayed.

I enclose Tasmania's submission addressing the issues raised in the terms of reference and look forward to the outcomes of the review.

Yours sincerely



Jim Bacon MHA  
*Premier*

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE  
REVIEW OF AUSTRALIA'S SKILLED LABOUR MIGRATION AND  
TEMPORARY ENTRY PROGRAMS  
RESPONSE FROM TASMANIA**

**International competition for skilled labour**

Tasmania has not to date competed for particular skills overseas. However, it does participate in expositions in order to attract business migrants.

It is apparent that there is increasing international competition for skilled labour as countries seek to supplement the skills of their local populations with skills that have been developed through investment in education and training overseas. Often the greatest competition will exist in those areas where the home state has been most successful in generating human capital for export.

This policy priority is understandable and is the most realistic in terms of the destination country minimising the resources required to move a migrant from arrival and through the settlement process and into a successful economic role within the community.

This aspect of the skilled migration program assesses skills resulting from formal participation in training and education. An individual with lesser access to training and education may have greater potential than currently skilled people if given an opportunity to develop their human capital through training and education. Under the current system they would need to come through the family or humanitarian programs to be able to achieve this outcome.

**The degree to which quality permanent skilled migrants are being attracted to Australia and settling well.**

Referring only to the Tasmania situation, those skilled and business migrants who choose to come to Tasmania have settled well and tend to remain in the State. There is evidence that an increasing number of migrants wish to move to Tasmania to reap its lifestyle benefits. Tasmania is working with Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs to increase our migrant intake, however it should be noted that with specific skills shortages reaching chronic levels a more flexible approach to achieving a successful migration outcome in Tasmania is required. A specific illustration of this point is provided under the heading of Policy and Procedural Methods.

**The degree to which Australia's migration and temporary entry programs are competitive.**

There is little doubt that the Australian migration and temporary entry programs are competitive across the world. Whether this will be enough to ensure the ongoing success of these programs needs to be considered in the context of how Australia is seen to treat people of difference.

For example it would be interesting to know the impact on applications for skilled and business visas from Islamic countries to assess whether the political environment of the last year or so has had an impact on the attractiveness of Australia for Muslim skilled migrants and business people.

The design of a migration program needs to be supported by a consistent message about living in harmony, multiculturalism and cultural understanding in Australia.

**Policy and procedural methods that might be developed to improve competitiveness.**

In recent times Australians have engaged in a debate about the shape of the workforce in the coming decades. Declining fertility, an ageing population and an increasingly mobile skilled labour force pose policy challenges in the management of the migration program. The Prime Minister recently indicated that a good policy outcome would be to achieve an increase in the age that people reach prior to retirement from the labour force.

Currently DIMIA relies very heavily on age as a criteria which determines the likelihood of migration success as it is used to indicate the extent of future reliance on the Australian welfare system measured against the taxes that will be paid by the migrant over the course of their working career in Australia.

As mentioned above, age is a factor that contributes to this, but it can be overcome by a range of other factors such as independent wealth and income that render the likelihood of reliance on the Australian welfare system at any stage to be remote.

By way of example: recently a dentist (63 years old) from Britain sought to move to Tasmania under the Regional Sponsor Migration Scheme and his application was rejected due to age. With independent income of \$120,000 per annum, a firm job offer and a partner (aged 44) who also has skills in short supply in Tasmania it is apparent that a substantial economic contribution could be made at no risk to taxpayers.

No consideration appeared to be given to the other factors which would ensure there would be no burden on the taxpayer in retirement, which is the ostensible reason given for the decision to introduce an upper age limit.

The solution that was found in this case is sub-optimal for the intending employer, Oral Health Services Tasmania, as it does not have the capacity to prevent the dentist from finding another employer within the first two years of arrival. This goes against the very logic of the Service seeking to sponsor the dentist.

Should a State or Territory Government seek to nominate or sponsor migrants, barring health or security concerns, it is important that the involvement of the State Government is given appropriate weight. More processing and finalisation of visa decisions in local offices would encourage a more tailored approach to meeting the migration and skills needs of state and regional populations.

Tasmania also suggests that the business migration program would benefit from the introduction of a self-employed visa category for farmers similar to that used by Canada.

People who migrate to Canada as self-employed persons must have the experience, intention and ability to:

- establish a business that will, at a minimum, create an employment opportunity for themselves and that will make a significant contribution to cultural activities or athletics in Canada; or
- purchase and manage a farm.

We also note that the recent decision to change the independent skilled visa pass mark has ruled out a handful of potential skilled migrants to Tasmania who scored 110 points. Some improvements could also be made to the current three stage temporary skilled entry arrangements (sponsorship, nomination and visa application) to reduce its complexity and further streamline for occupations in regional or nationwide shortage.

#### **Settlement patterns for new arrivals and role played by State and local authorities.**

Skilled and business migrants to the State are well briefed on settlement in the State. Most skilled migrants to the State are sponsored by employers who assist them with their settlement and business migrants have usually visited the State prior to settling. Assistance is available through the Department of Economic Development in various forms (eg meet and greet, itinerary preparation, business research services, immigration advice, useful introductions and State Government sponsorship).

Skilled migrants and temporary entrants who come to Tasmania are settling in all parts of the State.

The State Government's Multicultural Policy gives key recognition to the need to attract and, just as importantly, retain more migrants. The Policy was adopted in late 2001 and all government agencies are actively engaged in developing and implementing better attraction and settlement strategies.

Through the State Government's partnership agreements with local government, awareness is being raised of the availability of skilled and business migration programs to fill the needs of local areas. A number of the larger councils are proactive in offering support to new arrivals.