

Cassandra Stevenson,


9 February 2021

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to provide a submission responding to the terms of reference 1(a).

The current global pandemic has forced Australia to close its international borders in order to keep its residents safe and control the spread of COVID-19 in the community. However, by closing international borders and having a limit on hotel quarantine allocations, the country is not able to have its pre-COVID levels of migration.

Migration has always been important to Australia especially to moderate economic shocks however a sustainable level is needed in order to maintain the country's natural resources and reduce congestion in cities in the long-term. The closed international borders provides the government a good opportunity to rework its current structure for the skilled migration program to cater to what the country really requires.

In order to respond to 1(a), the government should target onshore permanent residency applicants in all skilled categories (189, 190, etc.) as these people are already in the country on temporary visas and most likely to be holding long-term jobs and paying taxes. These temporary migrants are still contributing to the economy and pandemic recovery in the various roles they undertake. Some of them even partake in important long-term work such as innovation in digital and technology areas, infrastructure building, and ensuring sustainable cities. Moreover, these people are likely to not be contributing to the unemployment rate and would not be costing any locals their jobs or being a burden on the welfare system. Most of the other temporary visa holders who are unable to maintain their cost of living in Australia during the pandemic would have already left.

Rather than losing these temporary migrants due to their visas expiring and them unable to secure a permanent residency because of backlogs and long processing times, the government should prioritise onshore migrants. It is only logical to focus on onshore migrants in all categories while borders are still closed, and give the government a change to better understand what it needs from the skilled migration program until international borders can be reopened.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,
Cassandra Stevenson