

Immigration system in Australia

Below is my perspective as an individual who has lived in Australia for 15 years and still struggling for the PR, throughout my 15 years I have experienced changes in governments and immigration policies which highlights the challenges and frustrations that many long-term residents may face. However, I feel like none of the governments has actually looked into the root of the real issues. Below is elaborated on this issue and potential improvements. In conclusion, my 15 years of experience highlights the need for a more stable, transparent, and inclusive immigration system that recognizes and values the contributions of long-term residents. Policy improvements should aim to strike a balance between the evolving needs of the country and the aspirations of individuals who have made Australia their home.

6-Year Plan for all the visa Applicants: I would like to suggest introducing a 6-year plan for all the visa applicants. Be it onshore or offshore, this program will get all the applicants to contribute to the economy while staying in a specific region before securing their PR. This can reduce unemployment and promote regional development. This can be a pathway to PR, ensuring that individuals invest in the country before becoming permanent residents.

For example, a student coming to study a Bachelor of Engineering program will have to complete their studies for 3 years and work for 3 years in the region for them to qualify for the PR. Also, offshore applicants who are willing to come to Australia can come here on a provisional visa for 6 years which will eventually lead to PR. This will benefit the government in so many ways such as you wouldn't have to bear the Medicare cost for offshore people coming from overseas as they are currently getting the Medicare and centre link benefits even without contributing to the economy. Also getting everyone to work in particular region for a certain period will boost the economy creating a workforce cycle minimizing the employment shortages. This will also give a clear pathway for the applicants while mitigating other exploitations by employers and staff.

Another suggestion under the 6-year plan is to give Medicare for people after 2 years of full-time contribution to the economy. This will be a win-win situation for both the government and the workers. As they will be contributing to the economy before using government benefits.

Prioritizing Onshore Applicants: Onshore applicants who are already in the country, contributing to the economy, and potentially meeting the skilled labour needs, should receive fair consideration for permanent residency over offshore applicants as they have demonstrated their commitment to Australia by being physically present and actively participating in the workforce or communities. Onshore applicants are more likely to have already integrated into Australian society, contributing not only economically but also socially and culturally. They have established networks, possibly started families, and made investments in their lives here. Granting them permanent residency can strengthen these ties and enhance their contributions. During past few months in all the invitation rounds that had

taken place offshore applicant were prioritized over onshore applicants and this leads to an extreme frustration for the onshore applicants waiting for an invitation.

For an example assume a family of five coming to Australia on a 190 visa will be given Medicare out of taxpayers' money. These taxpayers are Australian residents. I believe it is unfair for the onshore applicants who are already contributing and paying tax for the benefit of the country. Therefore, striking a balance between these two groups can ensure that Australia benefits from a diverse pool of talent while also recognizing the value of those already within its borders.

Economic Contribution for PR: It's crucial that individuals seeking Permanent Residency (PR) actively contribute to Australia's economy. One way to ensure this is by implementing a system that assesses an applicant's economic contribution potential before granting PR. This could include a requirement for a certain period of employment and payment of taxes. The ultimatum is no individual should get the permanent residency without a significant number of years contributing to the economy in Australia. Above suggested 6-year plan will actually be a good resolution for this situation as individuals would only secure their PR after 6 years of contribution.

491 Visa for Offshore Applicants: The 491 visa should have stricter guidelines for offshore applicants. They should commit to a specific region and occupation for a defined period before being eligible for PR. This would ensure that the visa serves its purpose of regional development and reduces the burden on government resources like Medicare. As majority of the applicants coming to Australia on a 491 visa do some other non-related occupation so the main purpose of getting skilled workers to the country under the 491 visa is not being served. For an example a chef comes on a 491 visa will come to Australia and will start working in a supermarket. The main purpose of giving 491 visas for offshore applicants is to bring people into the regional area and get them on a nominated skill occupation. However, when the applicants get to know that there's no condition for them to stick to their occupation or the nominated regional area, they will try to look for more easy kind of jobs which may be completely unrelated to their occupation because for them getting adapted to Australian working culture is difficult due to so many barriers such as language and different work cultures/ settings etc. For an example a head chef coming from overseas is more sort of a senior chef who would just overlook things but wouldn't have much involvement when it comes to the operation. But in Australian work setting the head chef is a hands-on chef in the kitchen. So, for offshore chefs to get adapted to the Australian work culture will take a minimum 2 years or so. For this situation these workers would select an easy job which will be non-related to their occupation.

In addition, since 491 visa holders have no restrictions shifting from one regional area to another, they tend to switch their nominated regional areas and move to different places. This is eventually leading that nominated regional area lose out on their skilled workers who has arrived in Australia pledging to work in these particular regional areas wasting their allocations.

Therefore, my opinion is if the department wants to bring offshore applicants on a 491 have a different set of conditions that will keep them in the same or similar kind of occupation while they live within the same nominated region or RDA that has given them the invitation.

190 Offshore Visa Verification: Addressing document fraud and skill authenticity concerns is vital. The government should invest in better verification processes and potentially collaborate with source countries to confirm qualifications. It's also essential to recognize the differences in working cultures and skill levels between countries when assessing offshore applicants. I have personally witnessed applicants doing fraud documents and fabricating documents just for the visa purposes and they get the permanent residency without any issue or struggle while the onshore qualified applicants go through so much to secure their permanent residency after contributing and paying tax to Australia.

Processing times: There should be a standard processing time for all the states when it comes to assessments. As one state would provide the outcome in 4 months whereas another state would take 17 + months to provide an outcome. This is impacting the applicants in a major way when it comes to visas like 491 as the applicants waiting periods would increase due to the delays of different states.

For an example for my own 491 visa application, I was waiting for 17 months to get an outcome whereas another individual who had completed their bachelor studies in hotel management in blue mountain applied for the 491 in SA and got the visa granted within 4 months. If it's the same visa category it should not have double standard as the 491 provisional period of 3 years will be longer. Under same visa category one person will enjoy the Medicare benefits within 4 months whereas I had to wait for 17 months to get the visa and other benefits granted which is completely unfair.

Points System: English shouldn't be a component of the point system. While English proficiency is important, allocating a standard number of points for it and placing more emphasis on other factors like education, work experience, and skills assessment would create a more balanced points system. This would ensure that PR applicants have a well-rounded set of qualifications.

Employment-Sponsored Visa Reform: To prevent employer exploitation, consider removing the employer's authority over an employee's residency. Instead, the employer sponsorship visa should be limited to a work visa which allows employers to bring skilled workers into the country. Under this program the employee should agree to work for this specific employer for a mandatory 1-year period, if the employee is not satisfied with their employer, they should be given the flexibility to change the employers however within the same region after completing the mandatory period. In order to qualify for the permanent residency, the employees are anyway required to work for 6 years according to the previously discussed 6-year plan.

For an example if you check the stats of chefs given the permanent residency under employer sponsored 457/482 leading up to 186 and the number of chefs who are currently in the same occupation after securing their PR it will be evident that how many people have changed their occupations as most of the chefs use and exploit this employer sponsorship scheme. This ensures that employees have some job stability while not being overly reliant on a single employer for their PR status.

Minimum Salary Requirements: Reevaluate the \$70,000 minimum salary requirement for visas, especially in regional areas. Consider adjusting the figure based on regional economic conditions and the type of occupation. The increase in the minimum salary requirements for employer-sponsored visas, have added to the challenges faced by employers managing and operating small to medium-sized businesses in regional areas. These regional areas already present unique difficulties, and these changes have exacerbated the struggles of employers. Also, assessing the actual skills and expertise of employees from different countries can be challenging. While they may possess paper qualifications, it is often impossible to gauge their true abilities until they begin working in an Australian work culture. Committing to pay a minimum salary of \$70,000 for an employee whose skills and expertise remain unverified can be financially burdensome and risky for employers.

The recent introduction of a minimum salary of \$70,000 has prompted many employees to seek new sponsorships, offering the increased salary, leading to a situation that has become increasingly difficult to control. This has given rise to instances of employees exploiting the sponsorship system and taking undue advantage of it. Therefore, reconsidering on the \$70,000 minimum wage would help small and medium businesses find the balance between fair wages and affordability.

Counter Exploitation Measures: Implement measures to counter potential exploitation due to salary requirements. This could include increased oversight and reporting mechanisms to prevent employees from underreporting their actual wages or employers finding ways to exploit the system.

Continuous Policy Improvement: Continuously review and update immigration policies to address evolving challenges and loopholes. Regularly seek input from experts, stakeholders, and the public to ensure the system remains fair, effective, and aligned with the country's economic and social goals.

Recognition of Contributions: One argument against making PR easier for asylum seekers is that it might not adequately recognize the contributions of other immigrants, such as skilled workers, investors, or students who have studied and worked in Australia. These individuals have followed the established immigration pathways and often make substantial contributions to the economy. Striking the right balance between humanitarian considerations and economic interests is challenging. It's crucial to acknowledge that asylum seekers are typically fleeing persecution and are in dire need of protection, which is distinct from economic migration. While both groups are valuable to the country, they serve different purposes within the immigration system. In conclusion, the challenge is to strike a balance

