



Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education
Minister for Youth
Minister for the Status of Women

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Mr Don Randall MP
Chairman
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Randall

Thank you for your recent letter to the Premier regarding the Joint Standing Committee on Migration inquiry into skills recognition, upgrading and licensing.

The South Australian Government recognises that an efficient and effective overseas qualifications recognition system plays an essential role in both South Australia's and the nation's ability to attract and utilise skilled migrants. The South Australian Government therefore welcomes this inquiry into the overseas qualifications system.

The availability of skilled labour is a major issue for many sectors within the South Australian economy. Our ageing population provides an ongoing challenge in ensuring there is a sufficient supply of suitably skilled workers to meet our future workforce needs.

Through *Prosperity through People, A Population Policy for South Australia*, the South Australian Government has increased the number of migrants settling in South Australia, both as a means of increasing the State's population and strengthening the skills base of the workforce.

Actions to increase the number of migrants to South Australia are working well. During 2003-04 South Australia received 4,773 migrants from overseas, up 30.5% from the previous year, with a further increase expected in 2005-06.

Many of these migrants are skilled and possess qualifications gained overseas. The success of any skilled migration strategy is dependent on those migrants finding work in jobs that utilise their skills, and finding those jobs relatively quickly. For that to happen, many migrants require assistance to find suitable work and to have their overseas qualifications and experience recognised.

In recognition of the critical role of overseas qualifications recognition the South Australian Government established the Overseas Qualifications Reference Group under the auspices of the Training and Skills Commission. The task of the Reference Group is to identify barriers to the recognition of skills and qualifications gained overseas and to identify innovative solutions.

Since forming in late 2004 the Reference Group has consulted widely with representatives of industry, government, ethnic communities, service providers, employers, unions, recognition and licensing bodies to identify a range of perspectives on the overseas qualifications system.

The Reference Group is currently preparing its report to the Government which will outline the barriers to effective overseas qualifications recognition, employment for migrants and identify what can be done to improve South Australia's overseas qualifications system. A copy of this report will be forwarded to the Joint Standing Committee Inquiry in the near future.

While not wishing to pre-empt the recommendations of the Overseas Qualifications Reference Group the South Australian Government would like to raise the following concerns about the national qualifications recognition system:

- *The need for an Adelaide office of Trades Recognition Australia*

South Australia is not receiving an adequate level of service from Trades Recognition Australia (TRA). TRA is responsible for providing national recognition in prescribed metal and electrical trades for permanent Australian residents who developed their skills through means other than an Australian apprenticeship, including those gained overseas.

South Australia is currently serviced by the NSW office. With an increase in the number of migrants entering Australia TRA is experiencing high levels of demand which is lengthening assessment times to unacceptable levels. This is creating frustration and delays for migrants in South Australia with these qualifications and is harming local industries which are in desperate need of skilled workers.

With an increasing number of migrants arriving to South Australia, the establishment of a TRA office in Adelaide is now warranted.

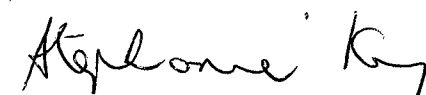
- *Removal of impediments for overseas students to apply for permanent residency*

The Commonwealth currently requires overseas students studying in Australia to have their Australian qualifications assessed if they wish to apply for permanent residency. This involves a financial cost and lengthens the time taken to assess their migration applications. This represents an unnecessary barrier for this group of potential migrants and should be removed.

- Greater promotion of complaints mechanisms for migrants using migration consultants

The South Australian Government is aware that many migrants and those agencies involved in providing employment and skills recognition services to migrants are unaware of existing complaints mechanisms for their dealings with migration agents. It is considered the Commonwealth could more actively promote the role of the Migration Agents Registering Authority (MARA) and provide information to migrants about their rights to complain about services delivered by agents.

Yours sincerely



HON STEPHANIE KEY MP
MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND FURTHER EDUCATION