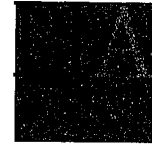


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28 JUN 2005

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Submission No.19.....
Date Received 24-6-05



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Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Department of House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) represents around 4 000 urban and regional planners and associated professions in Australia. The Institute supports the timely House of Representatives Inquiry investigating current arrangements for overseas skills recognition and associated issues of assessment of overseas skills.

In August 2004 the Planning Institute of Australia completed a National Inquiry into Planning Education and Employment and a copy of the report is attached as part of this submission. (It is also available on-line at www.planning.org.au). The Inquiry was prompted by the concern over the perceived shortage of planners. The Inquiry was funded and the recommendations supported by the Planning Officials Group, representing all State and Territory Planning Departments in Australia.

Amongst the findings relevant to this House of Representatives Inquiry were:

- The Inquiry's research and investigations (including an employer questionnaire) determined that there is a critical shortage of planners especially experienced planners occurring in the major cities and sea change areas, and this is likely to continue into the medium term. Whilst university places for planning students have increased in the last few years, there remains an unmet demand for planners and appropriately trained overseas planners should be allowed to supplement the Australian trained supply of urban and regional planners.
- To ensure easier access to working visas the Inquiry recommended that urban and regional planners be placed on the Migration Occupations in Demand List with PIA taking on the role as the assessment agency.
- During the research phase the Planning Institute of Australia had representation from overseas trained planners, recruitment agencies and planning employers concerned with the current unsatisfactory and lengthy processes required to obtain an appropriate working visa, at a time when there is a known skills shortage in this profession.

The Inquiry's report has been provided to the various Commonwealth Departments involved with assessing skill shortages, including the Department of Immigration, Department of Employment and Work Place Relations and Department of Education Science and Training. Representatives of the Planning Institute have also met and spoken on several occasions to various officials about the skills shortages and the request to include urban and regional planners on the Migration Occupations in Demand List.

However despite the comprehensive analysis undertaken by the PIA and numerous representations, to date there has been little progress within Government on this issue, which is a serious concern to the planning profession.

PIA recommends that improvements be made to the existing system as it is clearly failing to respond in a timely and co-ordinated way to the serious skill shortages facing our profession and as we understand, many other professions as well.

We put forward the following ideas for improvement as the peak professional body representing urban and regional planners which has found current processes frustrating and cumbersome at a time when it is critically important to move quickly to improve the labour market supply of planners in Australia:

1. The Commonwealth should have open dialogue with professional industry groups including an agreed monitoring and feedback system in place that can allow early identification of labour market problems, before they reach a critical stage.
2. The Migration Occupations in Demand List should be more flexible and reviewed regularly – as we understand this list is only updated on a yearly basis.
3. There should be a “one stop shop” within Government for peak bodies to discuss labour market issues and be fast tracked through the various steps required to bring in overseas trained people and if necessary become the assessing agency.
4. Addressing the current skill shortages should be given priority and appropriate resources within Government.
5. Re-assessing the 45 year age limit for skilled migration, which currently deters experienced planners entering the country.

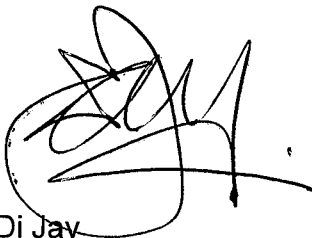
The Planning Institute has established a national steering committee to oversee the Inquiry's recommendations and this committee reports regularly to the Planning Officials Group, the Australian Local Government Association, Australian and New Zealand Planning Schools and other related industry groups.

Significant progress has been made on most of the recommendations. However the recognition of urban and regional planners as having a skill shortage for immigration purposes (i.e. recognition as an occupation in demand) remains outstanding despite the Institute's various attempts over a period in excess of 18 months to liaise with interested agencies within the Commonwealth Government to see this issue addressed.

As an Institute representing urban and regional planners, we support the House of Representatives Inquiry's Terms of Reference and look forward to reviewing the recommendations that will address the current problems, and delays in timely addressing, of issues associated with overseas skilled migration.

If you require any further information regarding this submission please contact Liz de Chastel on telephone 6288 0729.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Di Jay', written over a circular stamp or seal.

Di Jay
Chief Executive Officer

24 June 2005