



Senator Chris Evans
Leader of the Government in the Senate
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship

Mrs Julia Irwin MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mrs Irwin

Thank you for your letter of 4 September 2008 concerning a petition requesting leave to apply for permanent residence for Mr Richard Manthorpe and his wife.

In his petition Mr Manthorpe indicates that he and his wife are residing in Australia on the Retirement (Subclass 410) visa. I would like to clarify that Mr Manthorpe and his wife, and other Retirement visa holders are free to apply for one of Australia's many permanent visa categories. An individual's circumstances are taken into account in assessing eligibility.

Australia's Migration Program aims to strike the best possible balance between a range of economic, social, humanitarian, international and environmental interests and obligations. The Australian Government has a responsibility to manage current and future demands for permanent migration. In doing this, consideration is given to the impact that an ageing population has (and will continue to have) on Commonwealth, State and Local Government resources.

Concerns about the Retirement visa have been raised with me by a great number of people. In particular they have expressed the view that these visa holders should automatically be entitled to permanent residence. Currently, these visa holders are able to remain in Australia indefinitely, using the generous roll-over provisions allowing for subsequent visa grants. However, as temporary residents they are not entitled to access many benefits that would be available to them if they were granted a permanent visa.

I have indicated to Retirement visa holders and their supporters that I am sympathetic to their claims and support the proposal to provide a pathway to permanent residence for retirees who have chosen to make Australia their home. I intend to pursue options that may allow the Government to make a pathway available in the future.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely

CHRIS EVANS

14/10/08