



# Jon Stanhope MLA

CHIEF MINISTER

ATTORNEY GENERAL MINISTER FOR HEALTH MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY AFFAIRS  
MINISTER FOR WOMEN

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MEMBER FOR GINNINDERRA

Ms Teresa Gambaro MP  
Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Migration  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Gambaro

Thank you for your letter of 26 June 2002 regarding a review of Australia's Skilled Labour Migration and Temporary Entry Program.

From a national perspective, the ACT is not a prime destination for migrants in Australia as many arrive in larger metropolitan centres such as Sydney where they perceive that they will find greater employment and business opportunities. Of the 809 migrants arriving in the ACT in 1999-2000, Skill Stream settlers accounted for 34.7 per cent.

An emphasis on skilled labour is particularly important for the ACT. The Centre for Strategic Economic Studies commissioned a report on the information communication technology (ICT) industry in March 2001. Despite accounting for only 1.6% of Australia's population, the ACT provided a base for 4.5% of all ICT businesses in Australia in 1989-99. ICT jobs in the ACT grew by 28% from 1995-96 to 1998-99, compared to the next largest increase of 11% in Tasmania. In addition, the ACT also accounted for 3.5% of Australia's ICT jobs. Therefore, any increase in ICT skilled immigrants would be of considerable economic benefit to the ACT. Likewise, an increase in the contingency reserve for ICT workers would be highly desirable.

A discussion paper released by the National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE) in December 1998, *Skill Shortages in Australia's IT&T Industries*, reported that there was a shortage of professionals and estimated that the skill shortage will continue into the future. Skill shortages also exist in other professions such as accounting (particularly taxation accounting), software engineering, process and systems management, and metal trades.

Shortages are particularly prevalent for mental health nurses, general practitioners, certain medical specialists and radiation therapists. Immigration restrictions impact on the capacity to recruit doctors and contribute to the shortage of doctors in the ACT. The ACT Government would welcome opportunities to discuss the issues of attracting doctors to the ACT and having input into the review of the related immigration policy.

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The ACT Government employs a range of strategies to attract and support skilled migrants. These include the utilisation of a website and other vehicles to promote Canberra to international markets as an ICT city with high quality lifestyles, advanced facilities, and excellent educational institutions.

The ACT Government's direct assistance to migrants and potential migrants includes:

- the provision of support for visa applications either through State/Territory points allocation or letters of support, dependent on the visa class;
- assistance with market research and business planning, with information tailored to meet the specific needs of clients;
- the provision of advice on family needs such as education, housing, buying cars, medical services, childcare;
- the coordination and escorting of exploratory visits to Canberra;
- the provision of tailored relocation advice;
- the provision of information relating to ACT Government business incentive programs; and
- the provision of settlement support to enable families to settle quickly.

The ACT also has an important advantage in relation to settling new arrivals due to the large proportion of its population from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

In addition, the ACT Government's ACT Public Service Workplace Experience and Support Program helps people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds by providing them with opportunities to improve their skills and become more job ready. This program has proved useful in integrating migrants into the ACT community and assisting them to gain employment.

The ACT Government also provides interpreting services free of charge when migrants seek access to ACT Government services and programs. The Migrant Resource Centre and the Belconnen Community Centre provide English language courses and recreational activities for migrants.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input to the review. I would appreciate receiving a copy of your final report.

Yours sincerely



Jon Stanhope MLA  
Chief Minister