
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Report of the Parliamentary Delegation to New Zealand: Australia-New Zealand Committee Exchange Program

27-31 August 2006

Joint Standing Committee on Migration

November 2006
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Contents

Foreword	v
Membership of the Committee	vii
Membership of the Delegation.....	viii
Visit objectives.....	ix
List of abbreviations	xi
1 Overview	1
Official program	1
Parliamentarians	1
Parliamentary committees.....	3
Immigration New Zealand	4
Appeals tribunals.....	5
Mangere Refugee Reception Centre.....	5
Refugee resettlement services.....	6
Peak ethnic councils	6
New Zealand Qualifications Authority	6
Comparative summary	7
Migration program and statistics	7
2 Immigration related issues.....	13
Review of the Immigration Act.....	13
Streamlining the appeals tribunal	15
Removal of unlawful non-citizens	17
Changes to the skilled migration program	18

Overseas skills recognition.....	19
Licensing and registration	21
English language requirements for skilled migration.....	21
Refugee program	22
Refugee settlement services	25
Volunteers program.....	26
Ethnic representation and government policy	27
Migrant settlement services	29
Appendix A: Program	31

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1	Overall migrant/refugee intake, 2004-05.....	9
Table 1.2	Major countries of origin for permanent skilled migrants, 2004-05.....	9
Table 1.3	Points test for skilled migrants	10
Table 1.4	Temporary visas issued (main categories), 2004-05	12
Table 2.1	Appeal tribunal statistics, 2004-05.....	17
Table 2.2	Refugee quota composition, 2001-06	23
Table 2.3	Refugee quota source countries, 2001-06.....	23
Table 2.4	Ethnic composition of New Zealand resident population (census data).....	27

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	Delegation members with the Speaker of the House of Representatives of New Zealand, the Hon Margaret Wilson MP.....	2
Figure 1.2	Delegation members with the Chair and members of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee.....	3
Figure 2.1	Delegation members with Mr Brett Denham, Acting Chief Executive, and Ms Jenni Broom, National Manager, Client Services, RMS Refugee Resettlement.....	26
Figure 2.2	Delegation members with representatives of the New Zealand Federation of Ethnic Councils.....	28



Foreword

Australia and New Zealand have a close and cooperative relationship. The relationship between the two countries at a government-to-government level, for example, is well developed and extensive. Ministers and government officials from both countries regularly participate in meetings on a wide range of issues. Australia and New Zealand also have close economic and trade ties. New Zealand is now Australia's fifth largest market, while Australia is New Zealand's principal trading partner. Thousands of Australians and New Zealanders also cross the Tasman each year as tourists, for business purposes or to visit family members.

Against this background of cooperation and strong linkages between the two countries, I was honoured to lead the Joint Standing Committee on Migration delegation to New Zealand in August 2006 as part of the annual Committee Exchange program between the two parliaments. The delegation took the opportunity to examine New Zealand's skilled migration program, as well as its overseas skills recognition process.

This report provides some background on the program assembled for the visit and a brief comparative overview of migration arrangements in Australia and New Zealand. Over the course of the visit, several immigration related issues emerged that were of interest to the delegation. The report concludes with a discussion on these key points of interest.

The visit to New Zealand was particularly timely given that, at the time, the Committee was finalising its inquiry into overseas skills recognition, upgrading and licensing. The terms of reference for the inquiry required the Committee to 'consider how Australia's arrangements compare with those of other major immigration countries'. New Zealand was one of the countries under examination.

The Committee concluded its report, *Negotiating the Maze: Review of Arrangements for Overseas Skills Recognition, Upgrading and Licensing*, shortly after visiting New Zealand. The report was tabled in Parliament in September 2006.


The delegation program was a busy and interesting one, providing a balance between formal meetings, and informal discussions and inspections. This provided us with an excellent overview of New Zealand's migration system. On behalf of the delegation, I would like to thank the New Zealand Parliament and the Speaker of the House of Representatives of New Zealand, the Hon Margaret Wilson MP, for the hospitality extended to the delegation. Our visit coincided with a sitting week in the New Zealand Parliament and this provided us with a great opportunity to observe parliament in session.

I would also like to thank the New Zealand parliamentarians, government and non-government officials, and peak ethnic groups with whom we met for the time they took to ensure that the delegation was well informed. Particular thanks go to our counterpart committees in New Zealand – the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee and the Transport and Industrial Relations Committee. The delegation very much appreciated the briefing they received from both committees.

The Parliamentary Relations Office of the Australian Parliament coordinated arrangements in their usual efficient and professional way. In New Zealand, the high quality of support provided during our visit by Ms Ruth Delaney, Visit Manager, Department of Internal Affairs, was much appreciated. The Australian High Commission in New Zealand also provided support over the course of the visit, and our thanks go to His Excellency Mr John Dauth, Australian High Commissioner to New Zealand.

Finally, I thank the other members of the delegation – Senator Linda Kirk, the Deputy Leader of the delegation; Mr Laurie Ferguson MP; and Senator Stephen Parry – for their active and constructive contribution to the delegation.

Don Randall MP
Chair



Membership of the Committee

Chair Mr Don Randall MP

Deputy Chair Senator Linda Kirk

Members Senator Andrew Bartlett
 Senator Alan Eggleston
 Senator Stephen Parry
 Mr Laurie Ferguson MP
 Mrs Julia Irwin MP
 Mr Michael Keenan MP
 Hon Dr Carmen Lawrence MP
 Dr Andrew Southcott MP



Membership of the Delegation

Leader	Mr Don Randall MP
Deputy Leader	Senator Linda Kirk
Members	Mr Laurie Ferguson MP Senator Stephen Parry
Delegation Secretary	Dr Kate Sullivan



Visit objectives

At the time of the delegation visit to New Zealand in August 2006 by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration, the Committee was finalising its inquiry into overseas skills recognition, upgrading and licensing. The terms of reference for the inquiry required the Committee to 'consider how Australia's arrangements compare with those of other major immigration countries'. One of the countries under examination was New Zealand.

The Committee had received evidence about New Zealand policy and procedures in the area of skills recognition and welcomed the opportunity to supplement this with discussions with the relevant New Zealand ministers, parliamentary committees, and government and non-government officials.

Australia and New Zealand both face considerable skills shortages, and with the high degree of economic integration between the two economies and high rates of cross-Tasman migration, the Committee welcomed the opportunity to examine the New Zealand skilled migration program in detail. The New Zealand Government announced changes to its skilled migration program in December 2005 and had recently commenced a review of the New Zealand *Immigration Act* 1987. In February 2006 the New Zealand Minister of Immigration also announced a nationwide initiative, *Settlement Support New Zealand*, aimed at providing improved settlement assistance to migrants and refugees. These were all issues of direct relevance to the work of the Committee.

The Committee was also interested in pursuing the following matters with its New Zealand counterparts:

- appeals processes regarding migration decisions;
- regional migration issues;
- border control issues; and
- immigration document and identity fraud.

The Committee concluded its report, *Negotiating the Maze: Review of Arrangements for Overseas Skills Recognition, Upgrading and Licensing*,¹ a few weeks after visiting New Zealand.

Chapter 6 of the Committee's report provides an overview of how Australia's skills recognition arrangements compare with those of other major immigration countries, including New Zealand. The section on New Zealand in the report incorporated some of the Committee's observations as a result of the visit.

¹ Joint Standing Committee on Migration, *Negotiating the Maze: Review of Arrangements for Overseas Skills Recognition, Upgrading and Licensing*, Commonwealth of Australia, September 2006.



List of abbreviations

DIMA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
DRT	Deportation Review Tribunal
EOI	Expression of Interest
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
INZ	Immigration New Zealand
ISSL	Immediate Skill Shortage List
LisNZ	Longitudinal Immigration Survey: New Zealand
LTSSL	Long Term Skill Shortage List
MRT	Migration Review Tribunal
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
RMS	Refugee and Migrant Service
RRA	Removal Review Authority
RRB	Residence Review Board
RRT	Refugee Review Tribunal
RSAA	Refugee Status Appeals Authority
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

