

July 4, 2005

The Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Parliament House
Canberra 2600

Submission from the Recruitment and Consulting Services Association

**REVIEW OF AUSTRALIA'S CURRENT SYSTEM OF ASSESSING THE
SKILLS OF PEOPLE WISHING TO MIGRATE TO AUSTRALIA UNDER
THE SKILLED MIGRATION SYSTEM**

Background

The Recruitment and Consulting Services Association (RCSA) is pleased to have this opportunity to provide feedback to the review of Australia's current system of assessing the skills of people wishing to migrate to Australia under the skilled migration system.

The RCSA is the peak industry body for the recruitment and consulting services industry and represents over 2,900 members from Australia and New Zealand. The RCSA sets professional standards, conducts research, educates and develops members' skills, monitors industry development and lobbies State and Federal Governments on issues directly affecting members.

The RCSA has an interest in this review as RCSA members are companies who provide recruitment services which include the sponsorship of skilled migrant workers ranging from qualified trades-people through to accountants and overseas trained doctors and medical professionals.

Given the nature of this activity, the RCSA is well placed to provide inputs to the current review. The RCSA has recently established an immigration committee to represent the recruitment industries position in relation to migration matters.

The Committee has identified skills recognition and the timely assessment of applicant skills as a key area of concern for the recruitment industry and an inhibitor to attracting suitably qualified skilled migrants to Australia.

The recruitment industry believes that the current requirements for skills assessment by relevant industry assessment boards or associations once in Australia is cumbersome and fails to recognize the current skills and relevant experience of individual applicants under the skilled migration program.

As an example electricians, a skill set experiencing acute shortages of skilled workers, must work with an Australian registered electrician for a defined period with no consideration of previous experience, before they are able to undertake skills assessment to receive registration in Australia.

This requires an employer to allocate additional resources and acts as a deterrent to skilled migrant workers to seek employment opportunities in Australia.

In the case of overseas trained doctors, again a skill set experiencing acute skill shortages around Australia, the visa and application process requires three months to complete. A similar application process in New Zealand is generally completed in seven to 10 working days.

The RCSA would like to provide the following inputs to three areas identified within the terms of reference for the committee.

- *Early identification and response to persons needing skills upgrading (e.g. bridging courses)*

The RCSA believes that the early identification of requirements for skills upgrading will do much to ensure that skilled migrants are suitably and practically qualified and able to quickly move into available positions in the Australian workforce. This will make skilled migrant workers more attractive to Australian employers.

Recruiters are able to play an important role in this area as they have a unique relationship with employers that enables the identification of skill requirements and evolving workforce needs thus allowing the identification and coordination of bridging courses in the country of origin.

- *Awareness and acceptance of recognised overseas qualifications by Australian employers*

The recruitment industry is well positioned to play a facilitation role in this process given our members relationship with Australian employers. The RCSA does note that an important element is the reciprocal recognition of overseas qualifications by professional associations and industry boards in Australia as many employers seek membership, certification or registration from the relevant boards or associations.

The RCSA believes this initiative is important to attracting the best skilled migrant workers to Australia. The RCSA recommends a coordinated education and information campaign is required to ensure Australian employers are aware of overseas qualifications as they are relevant to their industry area.

- *Achieving greater consistency in recognition of qualifications for occupational licensing by state and territory regulators*

The lack of coordination between authorities and states makes the movement of skilled workers within Australia difficult and for skilled migrant workers this situation makes Australia a less attractive option.

The RCSA recommends consideration is given to a national passport that allows applicants to complete a nationally recognized occupational certification that is transferable around Australia. The RCSA would welcome the opportunity to further develop this national occupational certification with government.

We thank the committee for this opportunity to provide inputs to this review. Further information about the Recruitment and Consulting Services Association is available at www.rcsa.com.au or by contacting me on tel: (03) 9663 0555 or via email julie.mills@rcsa.com.au.

Yours sincerely

Julie Mills
CEO