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From: Michael Pollard
Sent: Tuesday, 5 July 2005 12:20 AM
To: Committee, Migration (REPS)
Subject: Upgrading the skills list.

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BY MLC

To whom it might concern,

I am writing to you in the hope that you sympathise with the situation I find myself in at this moment in time.

On the 13th may 2005 I was encouraged by a nationally recognised private rail organisation to travel to Australia to complete a necessary railway safe working qualification, without this certificate I wouldn't be able to be sponsored by this company in order to migrate from England.

I completed and passed the course, I had a full medical, blood tests, drug and alcohol tests, a psychometric test and passed fit and reached the criteria that the railway expected from me to become employed as a locomotive driver.

The company offered me permanent employment to start on the 19th September 2005 at Chullora Inter-model Depot, I have a written signed offer of employment in my possession, other factors are a personal bond and sponsor from my spouses relatives and also accommodation, we would be living with them until such time when we could rent or purchase our own property, we also have the proceeds of the sale of our house in England to put down as a deposit on a property in Australia.

As you can imagine the immense disappointment when we informed that the restrictions that were enforced by immigration regarding train drivers, because they were not on the SOL list I would be unable to complete the move from England and apply for a work visa.

Electric and Diesel motive power driving is a highly skilled profession demanding high levels of skill and concentration, handling a 5000 tonne, 1800 metre in length train on a down hill gradient is a feat worthy of recognition along the lines of flying a Boeing 747, driving a passenger train with over a 1000 people on board during rush hour is a huge responsibility, he/she also has to know an extremely complex set of rules governing the railway and knowledge of how to repair a broken down trains under extreme pressure, relying on the drivers professional skills and attitude towards the work that the company he/she works for entrusts in him.

Whilst over in Australia I was amazed to find out that there is such a shortage of train drivers that there was controversy over the training of trainee drivers, this confounded me even more as I am currently employed in England as a Train Driver/Instructor Assessor and Driver Manager, I have had more than 14 years experience, in the current role, teaching for 4 years, would definitely be an asset to, either a private or state owned rail company.

What I am asking is that you consider the highly professional role of Passenger/Freight train drivers, give it the recognition it deserves, this role is so important to the economic and logistic state of Australia in as much as the passenger train driver move people to and from work everyday, the freight driver moves goods, coal, aggregates, steel, farm produce etc; around Australia and to ports like Botany for import and export.

Yours Sincerely

Michael Pollard