9

Overview

9.1   In the previous chapters, the Committee examined each of the main schemes in the light of the terms of reference. In this chapter the Committee provides a broad summary of the conclusions it reached as a result of those examinations and through wider observation of SsMM.

Consultation

> *Review and report on…the adequacy of consultations with States/Territories on the mechanisms that have been developed[1]*

9.2   Overall, the Committee concluded that the Federal – State/Territory consultation arrangements were working well. This was evident in references to developments by various witnesses and through the changes which were occurring during the course of the Committee's review, summarised in the South Australian Governments comment on:

> the Commonwealth's openness and responsiveness to change in fashioning mechanisms to meet regional needs.[2]

9.3   In the Committee's view there was an opportunity for the consultation arrangements to be improved further because of the perception that:

> consultations appear to follow a centralist "dogma" which does not reflect the real needs of regional input…[3]

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1   Terms of reference (see p. xiii).
2   SA Government, Submissions, p. 68.
3   Griffith City Council, Submissions, p. 255.

> too often the regional areas have issues that are not heard at State level and therefore go unresolved.[4]

> State Governments… put little or no effort into getting migrants into the regions, since they would take business away from the capital… there needs to be direct involvement between DIMA and regional offices of State Government rather than rely on the head office of State Government to equitably represent the regions.[5]

9.4   The Committee was aware that the expansion of the current Federal - State/Territory working parties to include the large number of local government bodies would make the consultation process unwieldy. In this context the Committee noted that there were a number of peak bodies, such as Area Consultative Committees, and the Australian Local Government Association, which might nevertheless be usefully be involved in the consultation process.

Conclusion

9.5   The Committee considered that existing consultation processes were proving responsive, and that this could improve if there was provision for appropriate regional consultation.

Recommendation 17

9.6   **The Committee recommends that DIMA pursue means of more active involvement of regional representation in its consultation process.**

Utilisation

> *Review and report on… the level to which the State and Territory Governments have utilised these mechanisms.[6]*

9.7   In 2000/01, a total of 3,846 visas were granted under all the SsMM in operation at that time. This was 4.8 per cent of the total number of

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4   Midwest Development Commission, Submissions, p. 249.

5   Member, Business Advisory Panel to Minister and DIMA, Submissions, pp. 235-36. For other views of this 'up-side-down' approach see Mr C. Chai, Submissions, p. 164.

6   Terms of reference (see p. xiii).

migrants arriving in Australia outside of the humanitarian migration arrangements.[7]

9.8   The Committee was not inclined to take the numbers of migrants attracted to Australia through SsMM as an indicator of the overall success of the scheme. In making this judgement the Committee noted that the initial discussions which led to SsMM had concluded that:

> settlement of new migrants is only a very minor part of any solution to issues of population growth pressures and regional development.[8]

9.9   The Committee was also conscious that the numbers involved in SsMM would be a result of the interplay of migrant and sponsor awareness of the schemes, and the ability of intending migrants to meet the requisite standards. These factors would be brought together by governments through SsMM arrangements but the outcomes would be outside the control of the Commonwealth.

9.10   A further cause for resisting making judgements about the success of SsMM on the basis of raw numbers involved was that what might be a small intake at the national level could have a significant effect on a small community:

> We have the second largest shire… but we also have the second smallest population… we support any business that we can bring to the shire… a major contribution could employ six people.[9]

Conclusion

9.11   The Committee considered that the numbers involved in each of the schemes was not a useful indicator of how well they were being utilised. Rather it was the effect of the SsMM on the areas utilising them that would indicate the level of success.

9.12   The differing intentions, operations, and duration of the schemes have precluded the Committee from reaching any conclusions about schemes as a group. The Committee did, however, note the apparent expansion of the use of case-by-case 'exceptions' which permit otherwise disqualified

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7   DIMA, Submissions, p. 521; DIMA, Fact Sheet 20, *Migration Program Planning Levels*, 20/7/01 shows total Migration (Non-Humanitarian) was 80,610. 1,575 or 2.0% of all non Humanitarian migrants were those whose applications were in the pipeline for the now discontinued Skilled-Australia Linked Arrangements (see Chapter 6). RSMS, STNI, SDAS, and REBA generated 2,149 migrants (2.7%).

8   DIMA, Exhibit 12, p. 4.

9   Mr W. Barber, Evidence p. 57.

applicants to migrate, and drew attention to this in recommendation No. 5.

Increasing take-up

Review and report on…steps that might be taken to increase take-up.[10]

9.13   The question of increasing the take-up of individual SsMM was addressed in the preceding chapters. In this section the Committee addresses some broad issues which relate to SsMM generally.

9.14   The factors which attracted migrants to an area had been investigated early in the germination of SsMM. Interviews with migrants in 1994, 1995, and 1998 revealed that nearly half (47 per cent) of the business and skilled migrants chose to settle where they did because of their job. For another 14 per cent the opportunity for employment was the determining factor, and for 12 per cent, their presence of family members governed their decision. Independent settlers' main reasons for choosing their destination were friends (29 per cent); job opportunities (22 per cent); and family (17 per cent).[11] Of the RSMS settlers, 80 per cent indicated that the job was a factor in choosing their location.   The same proportion indicated that lifestyle was a factor.[12]

9.15   This information indicated that if SsMM sought to exploit these motivations it could attract and keep migrants. In the Committee's view, the crafting of the various SsMM had in fact paid attention to those important factors in settlement decisions - work and family.

9.16   For this strategy to work effectively for SsMM, the Committee considered that potential migrants had to be aware of the schemes within the overall Australian migration arrangements. As one witness commented, Australia had a:

maze of migration… so many different visa options.[13]

9.17   The Committee examined aspects of maximising the utilisation of SsMM including:

- publicity;

10   Terms of reference (see p. xiii).
11   DIMA, Exhibit 12, p. 21.
12   DIMA, Submissions, p. 479.
13   SA Government, Evidence, p. 404.

- better marketing strategies;

- retaining migrants; and

- implications of increased take-up.

Publicity

9.18   Improving the awareness of the schemes overseas and domestically might increase take-up of SsMM. One means of achieving this – publicity - was within the power all three levels of government.

Promotion of SsMM in Australia

9.19   In its hearings the Committee was told that, at Federal level, there was high priority attached to promotion.[14] DIMA's Hobart office, for example, ran a local newsletter and disseminated information on regional migration schemes through the Local Government Association of Tasmania, the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and a Client Reference group including major employers and migration agents. This had included two formal information sessions over a period of three years. [15]

9.20   Yet at a public hearing in Tasmania the Committee was told that the:

> local government association committee, the general management committee… have not had any information[16].

9.21   Similar complaints came from localities in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory,[17] and could be summed up in the comment from Victoria that:

> there is very little public knowledge within the regional communities of these sorts of schemes.[18]

9.22   The South Australian Government admitted that:

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14   DIMA, Brisbane Office, Evidence, p. 191.

15   DIMA, Hobart Office, Evidence, p. 346, Submissions, p. 340.

16   Circular Head Council, Evidence, p. 286.

17   *Queensland* - Cairns Chamber of Commerce, Submissions, p. 314; Member, Business Advisory Panel to Minister and DIMA, Submissions, p. 236; *New South Wales* - Riverina Regional Development Board, Submissions, p. 65; *Victoria* - Westvic Pumps, Evidence, p. 41; Rural Workforce Agency, Evidence, p. 75; *South Australia* - South East Area Consultative Committee, Submissions, p. 104, Evidence, p. 62; *Western Australia* - Goldfields Esperance Development Commission, Submissions, pp 276-77; *Northern Territory* - DIMA, Darwin Business Centre, Evidence, p. 137.

18   Westvic Pumps, Evidence, p. 41.

to try and improve that take-up rate into the regions... does take a fair bit of moving, in our experience, to get an uptake into country areas.[19]

9.23   However, as the Tasmanian Government commented, there was some political sensitivity in promoting a scheme:

without having those in the broader community thinking that they are sitting without a job and we are telling the employer to bring somebody else in from overseas. It is a very fine line that we have to walk here.[20]

9.24   In addition, as a number of witnesses reminded the Committee, the timing of any promotion affected how SsMM were received and understood because:

individual employers tend not to focus on the availability of different mechanisms until they have a need to recruit somebody.[21]

9.25   The Committee acknowledged that resources also constrained promotion of SsMM. DIMA's Migration Program was only one of the Department's responsibilities. It accounted for only about eight per cent of staff assets, and SsMM were but one part of that program.[22]

9.26   At the conclusion of its review, the Committee was assured that the level of publicity had been increased since its examination of SsMM had begun and that DIMA conducted:

a range of state-specific migration mechanism awareness raising activities…Key elements of the state-specific migration mechanism component of this strategy which are being progressively implemented in order to increase awareness of these mechanisms include: development of a comprehensive information package for distribution to appropriate organisations; establishment of a network of key stakeholders in DIMA and state/territory government organisations; development of strategic partnerships with business stakeholders to improve awareness of the schemes; and reporting by DIMA and states and territories on a six monthly basis on state specific migration mechanism awareness raising

19   SA Government, Evidence, p. 434.

20   Tasmanian Government, Evidence, p. 314. 'Now and then somebody local will say, 'This is what is happening. Look what jobs have been taken away" ' Greater Green Triangle Region Association, Evidence, p. 27.

21   DIMA, Brisbane Office, Evidence, p. 186. See also - SA Government, Evidence, p. 403; DIMA, Darwin Office, Evidence, p. 147.

22   At 30/6/99 (the most detailed recent published data) DIMA's Australian staff totalled 3,050, of whom 253 were in the Migration Program (sub-program 2.1), DIMA, *Annual Report* 1998-99;

activities to the Commonwealth/State Working Party on Skilled
Migration… Within Australia various publications are used to
enhance awareness raising of state-specific migration
mechanisms.[23]

9.27   Despite this assurance, the Committee remained concerned about how
widely SsMM were known because even those using RSMS, which had
been operating since 1995/96, thought that it was not yet adequately
publicised.[24] As one witness said to the Committee:

employers… unless they think of approaching Immigration or
they get an invitation to a seminar or see something in the paper,
they are just not going to know that they can recruit someone in
the particular profession from overseas.[25]

9.28   Tasmania, the Northern Territory, and the Australian Capital Territory
each had a single certifying body and DIMA was therefore likely to be
able to play a significant part in promotion because of the close contact
between it and the certifying body.

9.29   Publicity for individual States and Territories was ultimately the
responsibility of those authorities,[26] but a member of the Minister's
Business Advisory Panel argued that:

it is the responsibility of DIMA to try and couple with other
agencies to come up with a total solution…I am suggesting that
DIMA needs to be more proactive and try to get their product
through, because the other agencies are either not interested, do
not have the capability, or do not understand.[27]

9.30   The Committee received a number of suggestions about future
cooperation on publicising SsMM which reflected a conviction that local
governments had the detailed knowledge needed to be effective in
targeting the program.[28] The South East Area Consultative Committee,
based in Mt Gambier in South Australia, reflected that:

you have a network of area consultative committees throughout
Australia that…you could utilise a bit more in the dissemination of

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23   DIMA, Evidence, p. 467. DIMA, Submissions, p. 524 identifies a number of DIMA information
      initiatives in relation to local administrations.

24   'A number of respondents remarked that the RSMS should receive wider publicity and
      promotion'. SA Government, Submissions, p. 199.

25   DIMA, Darwin Business Centre, Evidence, p. 145.

26   DIMA, Evidence, p. 477.

27   Member, Business Advisory Panel to Minister and DIMA, Evidence, pp 207, 214.

28   Greater Green Triangle Association, Submissions, p. 146.

> information. ACCs are there within the regions virtually looking at local solutions to employment, education and training issues.[29]

9.31   In Western Australia, the Goldfields Esperance Development Commission proposed that DIMA provide each local certifying body with:

> a modest annual marketing allowance which would enable… agencies to better promote… in their regions.[30]

Conclusion

9.32   The Committee concluded that the lack of widespread knowledge of RSMS, the most popular of the SsMM, indicated that significant effort was still required to promote SsMM.

Recommendation 18

9.33   **The Committee recommends that DIMA improve its liaison with Area Consultative Committees, the Australian Local Government Association and Regional Certifying Bodies**

Promotion of SsMM overseas

9.34   According to DIMA, in order to promote SsMM:

> DIMA officers in both Australia and overseas attend international trade fairs and also targeted business seminars and workshops where information and assistance on business and skilled entry options is provided. Cooperative activities with other federal agencies such as DFAT, Austrade, Invest Australia and the Australian Tourism Commission, and with state and territory government agencies, are also undertaken offshore… We also use paid advertising and advertorials in publications overseas to promote Australia as a destination for business and skilled migrants.[31]

9.35   Representatives from State, Territory and local Governments and other local organisations had undertaken similar programs. The Tasmanian Government had worked in cooperation with DIMA to distribute

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29   South East Area Consultative Committee, Evidence, p. 62.

30   Goldfields Esperance Development Commission, Submissions, pp 276-77.

31   DIMA, Evidence, p. 467.

publicity overseas.[32] The South Australian Government had 14 overseas offices to assist promotion in potential source countries, and budgeted $70,000 per annum for all its publicity.[33]

9.36 This level of funding was unlikely to be available to local governments to promote their individual areas. Nevertheless, the Committee was impressed by the initiatives to promote migration which had been taken at the local level. These included visits to the PRC by the Greater Green Triangle Region Association and by the Ipswich City Council, video-taped information about Narrandera, and provision of local inspection visits for potential settlers by the Goldfields Esperance Development Commission.[34]

9.37 The Committee considered that these exercises provided useful prototypes of activities which might be pursued by local organisations. The Committee also considered that the local organisations were those best placed to take advantage of the fact that migrants identified 'lifestyle' as an important motivating factor in migration.[35]

9.38 In addition to promotion visits, the Federal Government, the State and Territory Governments, and some local governments, regional organisations and migration agents also maintained an international electronic presence through the Internet. Toowoomba City Council, for example, found that 90 per cent of the people who contacted it had visited its web site.[36]

9.39 The web sites visited by the Committee reflected the priorities of the sponsoring authorities. They therefore gave varying prominence to migration, and similarly variable attention to any of the SsMM under the migration umbrella.[37] The Victorian Government considered that DIMA's site should open with pages devoted to promotion of Australia and links to State websites.[38]

9.40 Search engines asked to locate references to migration to Australia generally produced extensive lists of websites. The DIMA and State and Territory Government sites were often less readily located than the commercial sites which offered assistance with visas, points tests, or

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32 Tasmanian Government, Evidence, p.312.
33 SA Government, Evidence, pp. 405, 438.
34 Greater Green Triangle Region Association, Evidence, p. 26, Ipswich City Council, Evidence, p. 377; Riverina Regional Development Board, Submissions, p. 64; Goldfields Esperance Development Commission, Submissions, p. 278.
35 DIMA, Submissions, p. 479, referring to RSMS migrants.
36 Toowoomba City Council, Evidence, p. 165.
37 There is an overview of the user-friendliness of the sites at Appendix E.
38 Government of Victoria, Submissions, p. 305.

business migration. Local authority websites were identified even less frequently.[39]

Conclusion

9.41   The Committee considered that the government and regional authorities interested in attracting migrants should seek to ensure that their sites ranked well up the lists generated by search engines pursuing migration information. This, the Committee considered, was especially relevant for the DIMA website which was the official Commonwealth migration showcase.

Recommendation 19

9.42   **The Committee recommends that DIMA review the content descriptors of its website with the aim of making it more visible to search engines.**

Better marketing strategies

9.43   The Committee was conscious that ready access to migration information by potential migrants was only part of the SsMM equation. It was also important that potential migrants to Australia have SsMM brought to their attention. The Committee considered that this might be achieved in a number of ways.

9.44   The Committee considered that there was a need to refine the targeting of potential migrants. As the Committee was told:

> you need to ask the question, 'Who do we need to market to?' You have to make sure that you target the right people;[40]

> you cannot expect people from large metropolitan populations to come and live in a small country town.[41]

9.45   Approaches by which DIMA might tighten its focus on SsMM included:

- expanding the range of migration booklets to include one covering regional migration arrangements;[42]

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39   Eg, the Search Engine *Google* did not list DIMA in its first ten sites when asked to locate *migrate to Australia*. With *Lycos* the DIMA site was number 7; 14 with *Yahoo;* and 2 and 3 with *Altavista.*

40   Greater Green Triangle Region Association, Evidence, p. 31.

41   Member, Business Advisory Panel to Minister and DIMA, Evidence, p. 209.

- more active alliances between DIMA and other departments, local organisations or migration agents to facilitate promotion of migration into regional areas; [43]

- creating a specialised Regional Section within DIMA;[44]

- making the number of regional visas granted a performance indicator for DIMA managers; [45]

- creating an electronically accessible database of regional employers with positions vacant;[46] and

- promoting SsMM as a lifestyle opportunity rather than purely as employment or family related.[47]

Conclusion

9.46 The Committee considered that the suggestions had merit. It was wary of recommending aggressive promotion of the concessions available through SsMM lest that aspect come overshadow the population and skills policy objectives of the schemes.

Recommendation 20

9.47 **The Committee recommends that DIMA review its promotion of SsMM with a view to making access to them more migrant oriented.**

Migrant Retention

9.48 In the Committee's view, increasing the take-up of SsMM would address only part of the schemes' aims. It was also important to encourage migrants to remain in the area if the population and skill policy outcomes of SsMM were to be maximised.

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42 Migration Institute of Australia, Evidence, p. 85.
43 These could include website hyperlinks to regional sites. Member, Business Advisory Panel to Minister and DIMA, Evidence, p. 207; Migration Institute of Australia, Submissions, pp. 50, 53.
44 Migration Institute of Australia, Submissions, p. 51.
45 Migration Institute of Australia, Submissions, p. 51.
46 Midwest Development Corporation, Submissions, p. 251.
47 Greater Green Triangle Region Association, Evidence, p. 29.

9.49   There was no consensus before the Committee on how long new settlers
         should be expected to remain in an area, but:

> if you are here for five or ten years you are contributing… it is the
> time they are here and what they contribute that is very
> important.[48]

9.50   As lifestyle was an important factor in some migration decisions, the
         Committee considered that it would also influence how long a settler
         remained in the area. 'Lifestyle' could be expected to encompass a range
         of factors, such as how welcome new settlers felt in an area, the level of
         support which they received, the cultural mix, job satisfaction and, as
         mentioned in Chapter 8, a number of family-related issues.[49]

Conclusion

9.51   Retaining settlers was, the Committee considered, a challenge most
         appropriately met by local authorities.

Implications of increased take-up

9.52   The outcomes of SsMM were intended to have positive effects on the local
         workforce, population and, through them, on the economy. The
         concessions which were allowed under SsMM could, the Committee
         considered, erode Australia's migration standards and also have a
         negative economic impact. The Committee briefly considered this aspect
         of SsMM.

9.53   DEWRSB pointed out that the benchmarks had been set for education,
         work experience, language proficiency, and age in order to ensure that the
         migrants had:

> a strong chance of participating quickly and successfully in the
> Australian labour market.[50]

9.54   Of the SsMM which it examined, the Committee considered that SDAS
         offered most potential for poor economic outcomes. This was because it
         did not require the migrant to have any employment in view on arrival, it
         was not points tested, and required less work experience and language
         skills than its parent scheme.[51]

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48   NT Government, Evidence, p. 131.
49   See Chapter 8, under *More consideration of family arrangements.*
50   DEWRSB, Submissions, p. 126.
51   See Chapter 6.

9.55   The other main SsMM appeared to pose less risk to Australia's broader migration and economic outcomes because RSMS and STNI both involved a job offer or job opportunity and REBA involved business people supporting themselves. Similarly, there were no major distortion of migration benchmarks in the concessions offered under these schemes.

Conclusion

9.56   Overall, the Committee concluded that the risk to Australia's migration and economic standards was acceptable in view of the existing safeguards in the schemes and the current low number of participants.

Other mechanisms

Review and report on… other mechanisms that might be developed.[52]

9.57   As with the other terms of reference, a number of suggestions concerning aspects of SsMM, or alternatives which might be developed, have been discussed in the relevant chapters.

9.58   The Committee did, however, conclude that the focus of suggestions on alterations to existing schemes indicated that there was general support for the existing approach to migration under SsMM.

Summary

9.59   SsMM were relatively new arrangements which were being tested and modified to meet the needs of governments and migrants. The Committee therefore observed an evolving, rather than a mature, series of schemes.

9.60   As suggested in a number of its recommendations, SsMM merit a further examination in the future, when they have become more established approaches to migration and settlement.

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52   Terms of reference (see p. xiii).