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Government of South Australia
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Office of the Chief Executive

Level 1 West
Education Building
31 Flinders Street
Adelaide SA 5000

GPO Box 320
Adelaide SA 5001

DX 542

Tel 08 8226 3821
Fax 08 8226 9533

Mr Don Randall MP
Chairman
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Randall

Officers from my department recently attended the public hearing held in Adelaide on 14 November 2005 for the Joint Standing Committee on Migration's current inquiry into skills recognition, upgrading and licensing. A number of questions were taken on notice, and with the assistance of the Department of Trade and Economic Development, I now provide a response to the committee.

Thank you for giving the Government of South Australia the opportunity to participate in the inquiry, and I look forward to considering the committee's findings and recommendations when it reports in 2006.

Yours sincerely


Brian Cunningham
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

22 December 2005

Att.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Has the South Australian Government involved itself in the DIMIA exhibitions overseas, such as those in London, Amsterdam, Berlin and Chennai? Provide comment of the value of this activity and the sort of people that may have been targeted through those exhibitions (see page 17).

Representatives from Immigration SA and the Department of Trade and Economic Development (DTED), have participated in all four DIMIA led skills expos.

The events were promoted to South Australian employers, and the following organisations participated in one or more of the skills expos:

- Tennix Defence
- Hendercare Nursing and Support Services
- Carlton Medical Centre
- Department of Family and Communities
- Whyalla Development Board representing regional SA
- SA Government Defence Unit
- Rexco (recruiting for a range of occupations including engineers, nurses, psychologists, social workers, various trades, naval architects, etc)
- BHP Billiton (representatives from Adelaide and Perth).

Feedback from these events was generally positive. The 'Team Australia' approach adopted by these events, with DIMIA taking the lead role and states/territories participating and working together, has proven to be valuable and should be supported.

DIMIA's pre-screening and pre-registration of migrants/potential migrants resulted in a high proportion and number of quality applicants.

Employers' participation in such skills expos and their ability to offer concrete jobs and 'interview' candidates on site seem to be the key draw card.

There are of course aspects that can be improved. In particular, a much longer lead time than this year should be given to the states/territories and employers to allow for preparation and planning. It is suggested that an annual plan taking into consideration the number of events in total, timing, location, rationale and key focus be put in place well in advance to allow states/territories and employers to factor that in their planning and budget process. The marketing messages in certain countries should also be reviewed to avoid giving candidates unrealistic expectations and subsequent disappointment.

DIMIA has sought feedback from all participating jurisdictions' post events:

Is any data available on where state-sponsored migrants finally settle? ie is there any data to support claims that South Australia is being used as an entry-point to the eastern states (see page 19).

One of the intentions of requiring nomination/sponsorship by a state/territory authority is to tie STNI (permanent, skilled) and SIR (provisional, skilled) visa holders to minimum periods of residence in the state/territory which provided the nomination/sponsorship. This intention is not currently enforced by law because

neither visa class is conditional on residence in a particular state/territory. STNI visa holders are entitled to live anywhere in Australia and SIR visa holders can live in any 'regional area or low population growth metropolitan area'.

Although Immigration SA asks all sponsored migrants to report to the agency upon their arrival and to update their contact details regularly, as there is no legal requirement for them to do so, current information on their status is dependent upon their goodwill in providing this information to Immigration SA. The monitoring process could be much more effective if the requirement to maintain contact with the nominating state/territory could come from DIMIA.

The same issue applies to two stage business skills visas. If a second state/territory agrees to sponsor a business migrant, who was sponsored originally by another state/territory into Australia, at the permanent residency stage, there is no mechanism available that is legally binding to stop it and there are no penalties for non-compliance with the original undertaking.

There have been incidents where migration agents were found deliberately promoting the weakness of the system and advising their clients to use South Australia's streamlined process to enter Australia and then they can move directly to Sydney and Melbourne. Immigration SA has referred these practices to MARA and DIMIA for their attention.

Although Immigration SA has observed a few cases of 'leakage' in the past, there is no specific data to indicate if such 'leakage' are just odd cases or the number is significant enough to cause concern.

One of the objectives to establish the State Specific Regional Migration (SSRM) schemes is to help the dispersion of migrant population in Australia, so that regional Australia and low population growth areas can benefit. It is important that this objective is maintained.

Confirmation of the State Government's migration targets, in total numbers (see page 19).

South Australia's Strategic Plan (SASP) has an overseas migration target which says '*Match South Australia's share of international migrants to Australia with the state's share of the overall national population over the next 10 years*'.

South Australia's Population Policy, *Prosperity Through People*, then set specific targets for three categories of international migration by 2008. They are:

- double or better (to 2,500) the intake of skilled migrants
- increase five fold or better (to 600) the number of business migrants
- increase to at least 10% (to 1,200) our share of humanitarian migrants.

Has the State Government made an approach to the Commonwealth Government for a TRA office in Adelaide, and if so, what was the Commonwealth's response (see page 22)?

The State Government has been awaiting the findings and recommendations of the Overseas Qualifications Reference Group. No formal approach has been made.

Could you outline the process that South Australia undertakes to sponsor a migrant under the state specific regional migration initiative (see page 24).

South Australia participates in a number of SSRM schemes. The processes for state sponsored skilled migration, employer nominated skilled migration, and Sstate sponsored business migration vary.

All programs have the elements of promotions and marketing and providing information to interested candidates prior to them lodging sponsorship applications.

All programs also have specific guidelines so they can be effectively used to meet the state's economic development (such as skills, workforce development, regional development, export and investment), social and demographic needs.

Once applicants lodge sponsorship applications, assessment will be made against the program policy and guidelines. The applicants can then go on to lodge their visa applications with DIMIA with the state sponsorships if they are granted.

Could you provide some statistics on South Australian TAFE uptakes and how many people are being sent away because of non-availability of courses, particularly in the areas that you see as South Australian shortages, over the last decade or so. (see page 25)

In South Australia there are high levels of demand for TAFE courses in nursing, children's services, aged care, prevocational hair and beauty, sport and recreation, performing arts, visual arts, graphic design, and dental hygiene. Demand for many courses in these areas is higher than the number of publicly funded places available.

While some of these are areas of current skill shortage in the South Australian labour market, it should be noted that the cause of these shortages are more related to employment conditions, wages, geographical location and so on, rather than to a lack of supply. Historical data on total demand for individual courses or occupational areas is not available.