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The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

# **New faces, new places**

**Review of State-specific Migration Mechanisms**

**Joint Standing Committee on Migration**

September 2001  
Canberra

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# Contents

Foreword.....	ix
Membership of the Committee.....	xi
Terms of reference .....	xiii
List of abbreviations.....	xiv
List of recommendations.....	xv
Executive summary .....	xix
<b>1 The Review .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 Overview of State-specific Migration Mechanisms .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Purpose .....	3
Origin .....	4
Mechanisms.....	4
Main schemes.....	5
SsMM utilisation .....	5
SsMM safeguards.....	6
SsMM resources.....	6
<b>3 The regional conundrum.....</b>	<b>7</b>
SsMM as regional schemes.....	7
But what is a <i>region</i> ? .....	8
Origins of SsMM regional focus .....	9
Divergent principles underlying SsMM.....	9

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Divergent definitions of regional Australia .....	10
<b>Designated Areas</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Promotional problems .....	13
Poor targeting of migration .....	13
Uneven competition .....	13
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Summary</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>4 Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS)</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>The Scheme</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Federal - State/Territory Consultation</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Localities involved</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Concessions to attract migrants</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Operation</b> .....	<b>19</b>
Skill Matching .....	20
Certification of demand .....	21
Safeguards .....	21
<b>Attractions of the scheme</b> .....	<b>22</b>
For the employers .....	22
For the locality .....	22
For the potential migrants .....	23
<b>Utilisation</b> .....	<b>23</b>
RSMS in Practice: The South Australian Government Approach .....	24
RSMS in Practice: Other States and Territories .....	26
<b>Issues raised</b> .....	<b>27</b>
Role of local bodies .....	28
Delays .....	29
Consistency .....	30
Lack of certifying bodies .....	31
Risks to employers .....	31
Flexibility on thresholds .....	34
'Exceptional' approvals .....	35
Medical Personnel .....	37
Usefulness of the Skill Matching Database .....	38

---

Labour market testing.....	39
Prior connections.....	42
Migration as a substitute for local training.....	45
Monitoring RSMS after arrival.....	46
Publicity.....	47
<b>Measuring success.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Summary.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>5 State/Territory Nominated Independent.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>The scheme.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Federal - State/Territory consultation.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Localities involved.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Concessions to attract migrants.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Operation.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Safeguards.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Attractions of the scheme.....</b>	<b>59</b>
For the States and Territories.....	59
For the potential migrants.....	60
<b>Utilisation.....</b>	<b>60</b>
STNI in practice.....	61
<b>Issues raised.....</b>	<b>62</b>
Usefulness of the Skill Matching Database.....	62
Resource implications.....	64
Employment opportunities.....	65
Legal obligations.....	65
Settlement intentions.....	66
<b>Measuring success.....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Summary.....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>6 Skilled – Designated Area Sponsored.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>The scheme.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Federal – State/Territory Consultation.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Localities involved.....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Operation.....</b>	<b>73</b>

---

<b>Concessions to attract migrants</b> .....	<b>75</b>
<b>Safeguards</b> .....	<b>75</b>
<b>Attractions of the scheme</b> .....	<b>76</b>
For Australia .....	76
For the sponsors.....	76
For the locality .....	76
For the potential migrants.....	76
<b>Utilisation</b> .....	<b>76</b>
SDAS in practice .....	77
<b>Issues raised</b> .....	<b>78</b>
Differing interpretations .....	78
Uncertain linkage.....	78
<b>Measuring success</b> .....	<b>80</b>
<b>Summary</b> .....	<b>81</b>
<b>7 Regional Established Business in Australia</b> .....	<b>83</b>
<b>The scheme</b> .....	<b>83</b>
<b>Federal – State/Territory consultation</b> .....	<b>83</b>
<b>Localities involved</b> .....	<b>84</b>
<b>Concessions to attract migrants</b> .....	<b>84</b>
<b>Operation</b> .....	<b>85</b>
<b>Safeguards</b> .....	<b>86</b>
<b>Attractions of the scheme</b> .....	<b>86</b>
For sponsors.....	86
For the locality .....	87
For the potential migrants.....	87
<b>Utilisation</b> .....	<b>87</b>
REBA in practice .....	88
<b>Issues raised</b> .....	<b>88</b>
REBA interaction with the Long stay Temporary Business visa .....	90
The need for flexibility.....	94
Centralisation.....	96
The concept of ‘regional’ .....	96
Encouraging investment.....	97

---

<b>Measuring success</b> .....	<b>98</b>
<b>Summary</b> .....	<b>98</b>
<b>8 Other mechanisms</b> .....	<b>99</b>
<b>More consideration of family arrangements</b> .....	<b>99</b>
Support for spouses .....	100
Dependent children .....	100
Family businesses .....	101
<b>Using projects as a driver for migration processes</b> .....	<b>102</b>
<b>New 'regional' visas</b> .....	<b>103</b>
Regional visa class.....	103
Investment-linked regional visas .....	104
Community-sponsored visa .....	105
<b>Onshore recruiting</b> .....	<b>105</b>
Working holiday-makers .....	105
Students .....	108
Refugees .....	110
<b>Lottery</b> .....	<b>111</b>
<b>Summary</b> .....	<b>112</b>
<b>9 Overview</b> .....	<b>115</b>
<b>Consultation</b> .....	<b>115</b>
<b>Utilisation</b> .....	<b>116</b>
<b>Increasing take-up</b> .....	<b>118</b>
Publicity .....	119
Better marketing strategies .....	124
Migrant Retention .....	125
Implications of increased take-up.....	126
<b>Other mechanisms</b> .....	<b>127</b>
<b>Summary</b> .....	<b>127</b>
<b>Appendix A: List of submissions</b> .....	<b>129</b>
<b>Appendix B: Hearings and Witnesses</b> .....	<b>133</b>

<b>Appendix C: Exhibits.....</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Appendix D: Key Features of Main Schemes.....</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>Appendix E: Migration sites.....</b>	<b>147</b>
<b>Appendix F: Glossary of key terms.....</b>	<b>151</b>
<b>Appendix G: Regional Certifying Bodies.....</b>	<b>155</b>
Table 3.1: Designated areas.....	12
Table 4.1 RSMS: Annual visa grants by State/Territory – 1995/96 – 2000/01 .....	24
Table 5.1 STNI: Annual visa grants by State/Territory – 1997/98 – 2000/01 .....	61
Table 6.1: Designated areas.....	73
Table 6.2: Regional Linked, SRS and SDAS: Annual visa grants by State/Territory 1996/7 – 2000/1 .....	77
Table 7.1: Designated areas.....	84
Table 7.2 REBA: Annual take-up by State/Territory – 1997/98 – 2000/01 .....	87





## **Foreword**

Equitable social and economic development of Australia has long been a concern for policy makers. One difficulty in realising this aim had arisen from the disproportionate attraction that the metropolitan areas exert on people compared with that of what is often called regional Australia. Australia's capital cities and their hinterlands have expanded while regional Australia has grown less quickly or has lost population.

The Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme was begun in 1995. In 1996 and 1999 the Federal, State and Territory governments examined how overseas migration might be managed to assist regional Australia to revitalise its population, its employment and skills base, and its economic prospects. New faces from overseas were needed in new places in Australia.

There were three main outcomes from the Federal – State and Territory deliberations of 1996-1999. Firstly, at the policy level, State and Territory Governments were given the opportunity to determine how some of the migration programs might be best used to meet those governments' own policy objectives. Secondly, existing visa arrangements were modified to permit those governments to pursue those objectives, and thirdly, Federal and State and territory working parties continued to review migration arrangements.

The Joint Standing Committee on Migration was asked to examine and report on the arrangements which were described collectively as State-specific Migration Mechanisms or SsMM. The Committee's conclusions concerning the rationale of these SsMM, their application in practice, and possible future developments are to be found in the body of the report.

During its review the Committee received many positive suggestions in submissions and during its visits to localities. It was singularly impressed by the energy displayed by local authorities and organisations in taking the initiative to maximise the benefits of SsMM.

**Mrs Margaret May MP**  
Chair



## Membership of the Committee

**Chair** Mrs M. May (MP) (from 6/3/2001)

Mrs C. Gallus MP (to 30/1/01)

**Deputy Chair** Senator J. McKiernan

**Members** Senator A. Bartlett

Senator A. Eggleston

Senator J. Tierney

Hon D. Adams, MP (from 12/8/99)

Hon B. Baird MP

Mr P. Georgiou MP (from 29/3/2001)

Mrs. J. Irwin MP

Mrs M. May MP

Mr B Ripoll MP

Hon Dr A Theophanous MP (to 9/8/99)

## **Committee Secretariat**

<b>Secretary</b>	Mr Richard Selth (from January 2001) Ms Gillian Gould (to December 2000)
<b>Inquiry Secretary</b>	Dr Steve Dyer
<b>Research Officer</b>	Ms Emma Herd
<b>Research/Administrative Officer</b>	Mr Vishal Pandey (from March 2000)
<b>Administrative Officers</b>	Mrs Anna Gadzinski (from July 2001) Mr Rohan Tyler (to August 2000) Ms Rachel Carew (to March 2000)



## **Terms of reference**

### **REVIEW OF STATE-SPECIFIC MIGRATION MECHANISMS**

To review and report on the suite of State-specific Migration Mechanisms and the extent to which these meet the needs of State and Territory governments for skilled and business migrants with particular reference to:

- The adequacy of consultations with States/Territories on the mechanisms that have been developed;
- The level to which State and Territory Governments have utilised these mechanisms;
- Steps that might be taken to increase take-up; and
- Other mechanisms that might be developed.

Referred to Committee 15 June 1999



## List of abbreviations

DAL	Designated Areas List
DIMA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
DEWRSB	Department of Employment, Workplace Relations, and Small Business
REBA	Regional Established Business in Australia
RSMS	Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme
SAL	Skilled-Australia Linked
SDAS	Skilled – Designated Area Sponsored (replaced SRS)
SMD	Skill Matching Database
SRS	Skilled-Regional Sponsored (superseded by SDAS)
STNI	State/Territory Nominated Independent



# List of recommendations

## Chapter 3 The regional conundrum

### Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that DIMA re-examine the identification of 'designated areas' in consultation with the States and Territories and establish a realistic set of criteria for areas to be included on the Designated Areas List which would avoid the distortions which currently exist.

## Chapter 4 Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS)

### Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that a specific definition should be devised by DIMA in consultation with the States and Territories to identify the areas covered by RSMS.

### Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that information concerning expected and current processing times be made readily available, including on the DIMA website.

**Recommendation 4**

The Committee recommends that DIMA ensure that potential employers and migrant employees are aware of the sanctions relating to RSMS employees who do not complete their two-year contract.

**Recommendation 5**

The Committee recommends that the scale of 'exceptional' approvals be continually monitored, and reviewed in 2003 in order to ensure that required standards remain relevant.

**Recommendation 6**

The Committee recommends that the use of the Skill Matching Database should be re-examined in 2003.

**Recommendation 7**

The Committee recommends that, in its advice to Certifying Bodies, DIMA indicate how labour market testing for RSMS may diverge from the standards for ENS and still be accepted as valid.

**Recommendation 8**

The Committee recommends that the role of personal contacts in the operation of RSMS should be re-examined in 2003.

**Recommendation 9**

The Committee recommends that DIMA make the employers' training record a consideration in RSMS.

**Recommendation 10**

The Committee recommends that a follow-up survey of employees' and employers' performance should be conducted in 2003 to determine whether successful applicants were remaining in regional areas as intended.

## **Chapter 5 State/Territory Nominated Independent**

### **Recommendation 11**

The Committee recommends that DIMA revise the STNI entry in the *General Skilled Migration* booklet prior to the next edition.

## **Chapter 6 Skilled – Designated Area Sponsored**

### **Recommendation 12**

The Committee recommends that a study of SDAS be undertaken in 2003 to determine how well it is meeting its stated objectives.

## **Chapter 7 Regional Established Business in Australia**

### **Recommendation 13**

The Committee recommends that DIMA provide settlers who have arrived in Australia and who have indicated their intention to use REBA with information about contacting DIMA and local agencies.

### **Recommendation 14**

The Committee recommends that the operation of REBA, including 'exceptional' approvals, be reviewed during 2003.

## **Chapter 8 Other mechanisms**

### **Recommendation 15**

The Committee recommends that DIMA examine the issues raised relating to family businesses and to arrangements for dependent children under REBA and determine whether they could be resolved without compromising Australia's broader migration criteria.

### **Recommendation 16**

The Committee recommends that DIMA examine the option of merging the existing SsMM visas into a single visa class.



## **Chapter 9 Overview**

### **Recommendation 17**

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

### **Recommendation 18**

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

### **Recommendation 19**

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

### **Recommendation 20**

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



## Executive summary

The Committee examined the State-specific Migration Mechanisms (SsMM) in the light of the pervasive depiction of them as regional schemes. It concluded that there was a considerable discrepancy in the use of 'regional' in relation to other official usage as well as within SsMM. This had caused continuing disquiet, and the Committee therefore recommended that definitions of the areas to which SsMM applied should be reviewed.

The Committee then reviewed each of the main SsMM in the context of the terms of reference, which covered:

- the adequacy of consultations concerning SsMM;
- the level of utilisation of SsMM;
- measures to increase utilisation; and
- other means of achieving the aims of SsMM.

The Committee's report on each SsMM contains recommendations which are specific to the particular schemes.

One general theme to emerge was that the SsMM were relatively new and consequently little known. The Committee therefore considered that a further review of the operation of SsMM might usefully be undertaken in 2003.

In addition, the Committee examined the SsMM as a group. The variety of schemes and their underlying aims precluded the Committee from drawing detailed conclusions which would be valid for the whole suite of SsMM.

Nevertheless, the Committee did reach some broad conclusions. In the context of the terms of reference the committee found that, with regard to **consultation**:

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

In relation to the **utilisation** of SsMM by the States and Territories, 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

Proposals to **increase utilisation** of SsMM were varied. The committee considered that:

- significant effort was still required to promote SsMM;
- there were a number of marketing strategies which might contribute to this;  
and
- it was important to encourage settlers to remain in the area if the population and skill policy outcomes of SsMM were to be maximised.

The **new mechanisms** which were suggested to Committee generally related to the aims of specific individual schemes. Therefore the Committee was unable to draw any broad conclusion about them, except to note that:

- as the focus of suggestions was on alterations to existing schemes, there was general support for the existing approach to migration under SsMM.