

Settling well?

- 9.1 One measure of how well skilled migrants were settling was that less than three per cent of them had left Australia permanently within five years of arrival.¹
- 9.2 The vast majority who remained were asked about their move to Australia. The skilled migrants were overwhelmingly positive in their responses. Approximately three quarters had already decided to take out Australian citizenship. More than nine of every ten primary applicants told DIMIA that they were satisfied or very satisfied with life in Australia, and the same proportions thought that their decision to migrate was correct. Slightly fewer, but in excess of 85 per cent said they would encourage others to migrate to Australia. Approximately half were more satisfied with life in Australia than in their former home country and approximately one third were about as satisfied as they had been at home. The longer they remained in Australia, the more satisfied they became.²
- 9.3 The Committee considered that migrants were likely to be predisposed to believe that their move was a good idea, so the question for the Committee was whether migrants were settling well, as they appeared to say, or whether they were downplaying any negatives in their responses to what was a DIMIA questionnaire.³
- 9.4 The Committee turned to another piece of DIMIA research, *Settlement Factors and Benchmarks* based on DIMIA's *Longitudinal Survey of*

1 DIMIA, Submission 25(a), para 8.

2 DIMIA, *Settlement: Summary of findings for LSIA2* in Sample Reports from LSIA2, www.immi.gov.au/lisia/lisia.06.htm

3 The survey was conducted by AC Neilsen on behalf of DIMIA.

Immigrants in Australia (LSIA). The indicators of potential and actual settlement success which were developed as part of the project indicated that:

migrants are more likely to achieve parity with ... [Australians] in economic participation and wellbeing before they achieve parity in social participation.⁴

- 9.5 The Committee had previously addressed the importance of applicant's spouses in the settlement process,⁵ so concentrated its examination of whether skilled migrants were settling well on factors directly related to a migration program based on skills.
- 9.6 The indicators chosen from the LSIA analysis as those representing economic participation were:
- labour force participation rate;
 - unemployment rate;
 - job satisfaction; and
 - occupational distribution.⁶

Labour force participation

- 9.7 Data for Skilled Independent and Skilled-Australia Linked migrants indicated that they generally had a higher participation rate than other migrants shortly after arrival, and also a higher participation rate than the local labour market.⁷

Conclusion

- 9.8 By this LSIA measure, skilled migrants were settling well.

4 S-E Khoo, P. McDonald, "Settlement Indicators and Benchmarks", Australian Centre for Population Research, October 2001, p. vi: Appendix 20 to DIMIA Submission No. 25.

5 See *Permanent Migration – personal points*.

6 S-E Khoo, P. McDonald, "Settlement Indicators and Benchmarks", Australian Centre for Population Research, October 2001, p. 4. Appendix 20 to DIMIA Submission No. 25.

7 For the 1999-2000 arrivals the participation rates were nearly 90%, compared with 54% for family stream; 65% for business skills and employer nominated, and 16% for humanitarian stream migrants. DIMIA, *Labour Force Status... Primary Applicants*, in Sample Reports from LSIA2, www.immi.gov.au/lsia/lsia.06.htm. National participation rate approximately 65%, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Year Book Australia 2003- *Labour Characteristics of the labour force*.

Unemployment

- 9.9 The DIMIA *General Skilled Migration* booklet stated that:
- approval to migrate...does not guarantee employment even for applicants who are highly skilled.⁸
- 9.10 In the first six months after arrival, 45 per cent of all migrants in the LSIA study indicated that they had been unemployed for half that time. An equivalent proportion (46%), however, reported that they had “never” been unemployed in those first six months in Australia.
- 9.11 Six months after arrival in Australia the unemployment rate for Skilled Independent settlers was nine per cent and 21 per cent for Skilled-Australia Linked migrants. Business Skills and Employer Nomination Scheme arrivals reported unemployment rates of four per cent.
- 9.12 The average unemployment rate fell away markedly in the subsequent year to less than seven per cent within 18 months of arrival.⁹ The comparable unemployment rate in the Australian labour market was between six and seven per cent.¹⁰ In Canada the unemployment rate for the closest equivalent group, the economic class migrants, was 41 per cent,¹¹ and in New Zealand 16 per cent of the skilled/business principal applicants remained unemployed after 18 months.¹²
- 9.13 After 18 months Australia’s skilled migrants were settling well, as judged by their unemployment rate.
- 9.14 Prior to that, however, the unemployment rates were higher and the Skilled Migrant Network argued that:
- as many skilled migrants experience severe economic hardship it is important that the government provides some assistance to families. Migrants have made a

8 DIMIA, *General Skilled Migration* booklet, p. 47, http://dima.cardgate.net/General_Skilled_Migration/1119.pdf

9 For the 1999-2000 arrivals unemployment was: 7% for Skilled Independent; 6% for Skilled-Australia Linked; 0% for Business Skills and Employer Nomination; 21% for family stream; and 75% for humanitarian stream migrants. DIMIA, *Labour Force Status... and Periods of Unemployment... Primary Applicants*, in Sample Reports from LSIA2, www.immi.gov.au/lsia/lsia.06.htm.

10 National unemployment rate 2000-2003 fluctuated between 6.2% and 6.9%. ABS, *Measuring Australia's Economy* Section 7. Labour Force and Demography - Unemployment and Labour Force Participation,

11 “Labour market entry”, Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: Process, progress and prospects, www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-611-XIE/labour.htm National unemployment rate approximately 7.5%. OECD *Standardised Unemployment Rates - July 2003* <http://www1.oecd.org/std/sur.pdf>

12 OECD Economic Surveys, Volume 2003, Supplement No. 3 - January 2004, *New Zealand*, p. 103. National unemployment rate between 5% and 5%, OECD *Standardised Unemployment Rates - July 2003* www1.oecd.org/std/sur.pdf

major investment in leaving good jobs in our own countries and migrating to Australia.¹³

- 9.15 The Committee examines government assistance later in this chapter, but recalled that the DIMIA *General Skilled Migration* booklet had warned intending skilled migrants that:

It is very important to understand that you should have enough resources to keep yourself (and your dependants) for at least your first 2 years in Australia. There is no alternative Government support program... A... Special Benefit may be available... if you are in hardship because of a substantial chance in circumstances beyond your control... [but] inability to find a job or running out of money are not sufficient reasons.¹⁴

- 9.16 The Committee considered that this was a sufficient indication to intending migrants of their need to have adequate finances to support their voluntary move to Australia, and the necessity of finding employment.

- 9.17 However, the Skilled Migrant Network's comment reminded the Committee that not all skilled migrants came to Australia under the skilled migration scheme, and therefore might not find employment as readily as those who had. For example, as Mr Kinnaird highlighted:

in 1999-2000, 1,011 computer professionals who were principal applicants under the skilled migration program arrived in Australia. Another 767 arrived with visas granted under the various family, humanitarian... entry provisions.¹⁵

Conclusion

- 9.18 Judged against local and overseas unemployment rates, skilled migrants were settling well in Australia within 18 months of arrival.
- 9.19 Labour force outcomes were but one indicator of how well new skilled migrants were settling in Australia, so the Committee was wary of equating their integration into the work force as absolute evidence that they were settling well. To the Committee, the migrants' satisfaction with their Australian employment and their

13 Skilled Migrant Network, Submission No. 50, p. 3.

14 DIMIA, *General Skilled Migration* booklet, pp. 47-48.

15 Mr B. Kinnaird, Submission No. 38, p. 12.

occupations prior to and after migration would also reveal measures of how well skilled migrants were settling in to their new country.

Job satisfaction

9.20 Job satisfaction has been identified as:

an indicator that the migrant has employment that is commensurate with his skill and qualifications.¹⁶

9.21 A DIMIA report on *The Labour Force Experience of New Migrants* indicated that some 53 per cent of economic migrants who arrived in 1999/2000 either “loved or really liked their job”.¹⁷

9.22 To the Committee, this appeared to be a disappointing outcome for schemes which were intended to select migrants with sound job prospects. That nearly half the economic migrants were not satisfied with their jobs might indicate that they may not be getting appropriate jobs and, consequently, Australia was not obtaining optimum benefit from some of its new residents’ skills.

9.23 Additionally, there was evidence that migrants themselves did not feel settled in the labour market until they were employed in jobs related to their previous experience.¹⁸

9.24 The Committee therefore sought evidence which might identify the extent to which skilled migrants were able to maintain their occupational status.

Occupational distribution

9.25 Under this heading the Committee compared occupations before and after migration. Initially looking overseas to Canada, the Committee discovered that migrants there experienced major changes to their occupations. Prior to arriving, one third were employed in “natural and applied sciences and related occupations”. This proportion collapsed to 14 per cent after they moved to Canada. Conversely,

16 S-E Khoo, P. McDonald, “Settlement Indicators and Benchmarks”, Australian Centre for Population Research, October 2001, pp. 25, 5. Appendix 20 to DIMIA Submission No. 25

17 *Economic migrants = Independent and Concessional Family/Skilled-Australian*, DIMIA, *The Labour Force Experience of New Migrants*, 2001, p. 43, p.84 electronic version www.immi.gov.au/research/publications/labour_force/nilsreport.pdf

18 M. Ip, “Successful settlement of migrants and relevant factors for setting immigration targets”, paper presented at The Population Conference, Te Papa Tongarewa, New Zealand: 12- 14 November.1997, cited in M. Benson-Rea, S. Rawlinson, “Highly Skilled and Business Migrants: Information Processes and Settlement Outcomes”, *International Migration* Vol. 41 (2) 2003 p. 65.

11 per cent were employed in “sales and service” prior to migrating and 30 per cent subsequent to arrival.¹⁹ The large shifts identified may well have been the result of the Canadian philosophy of recruiting people able to adapt or re-invent themselves.

9.26 In Australia, which sought migrants with specified skills, survey data did not identify such stark downward mobility as was evident in Canada. Table 9.1 below summarises migrants’ pre- and post-migration occupations.

Table 9.1: Selected occupations prior to and after arrival²⁰

Occupation prior to migration	Occupation after migration (%)					Total
	Managers, administrators	Professionals	Associate professionals	Tradespersons	Other	
Managers, administrators	46.9	17.7	10.8	0.4	24.2	100
Professionals	1.9	66.5	5.4	1.6	24.6	100
Associate professionals	3.6	7.9	37.4	14.6	36.5	100
Tradespersons	0.4	2.2	2.7	68.1	26.6	100

KEY



Potential decline in occupation status

9.27 It is evident from the shaded areas of the table that that some skilled migrants probably found themselves in jobs which might be considered inferior to those which they had prior to migration. Fewer than half of migrants who had been managers and administrators prior to arrival were in those occupations after arrival. This, the Committee judged, was not an optimum outcome for migrants recruited on the basis of their special skills.

9.28 However, the loss to Australia may not have been as severe as the changes in occupation might indicate because most migrants were still using the qualifications in their work. Nearly three quarters of the skilled migrants with qualifications used those qualifications all or most of the time.²¹ This may be compared to the just over 68 per cent

19 Table: Major Occupation Groups..., *Highlights of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada*; Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, *The Daily*, 4/9/03 Statistics Canada, www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/030904/d030904.htm and www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-611-XIE/free.htm

20 DIMIA, *The Labour Force Experience of New Migrants*, 2001, Table 4a, electronic version, www.immi.gov.au/research/publications/labour_force/nilsreport.pdf

21 Independent: *all* = 58%, *most* = 14%; ENS/Business: *all* = 62%, *most* = 12%. See DIMIA, *The Labour force Experience of New Migrants*, p. 65, electronic version, www.immi.gov.au/research/publications/labour_force/nilsreport.pdf Comparable data in DIMIA, Submission No. 25(a), Table 10 records: “*very often/often*” = 64% of Independent and 91% ENS.

of migrants in all streams who used their qualifications all or most of the time prior to moving to Australia. Approximately one in five did not use their qualifications at all after arrival, but a similar proportion of migrants had not used their qualifications in their jobs prior to migrating.²²

- 9.29 This information, and the details of pre-and post-arrival occupations, identified the presence of some under-employment among skilled migrants.

De-skilling

- 9.30 De-skilling of migrants occurred when they did not use their skills in their new homeland, so that:

the migration of some of the highly skilled workers may not be part of a highly skilled migration system at all, with the ‘deskilling’ of the skilled as they are thrust into more lowly occupational categories in destinations.²³

- 9.31 Both Canada and New Zealand identified de-skilling of migrants as a problem with their skilled migration programs – the “taxi driver syndrome”. In 2003 the Canadian Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration had commented adversely on “the PhD who ends up driving a taxi”.²⁴

- 9.32 New Zealand warned intending migrants that:

it is common for more highly qualified migrants to accept more junior positions than they held at home.²⁵

- 9.33 In mid 2003 New Zealand began to revise its migration program to avoid:

skilled migrants driving taxis, cooking hamburgers and cleaning offices²⁶...

22 DIMIA, *The Labour force Experience of New Migrants*, p. 65, electronic version, , www.immi.gov.au/research/publications/labour_force/nilsreport.pdf

23 R. Skeldon, “Introduction” to OECD, *Migration and the Labour Market in Asia: Recent Trends and Policies*, 2002, p. 11

24 Canada, Standing Committee On Citizenship And Immigration, *Settlement And Integration: A Sense Of Belonging - “Feeling At Home”*, p. 12. www.parl.gc.ca/InfoComDoc/37/2/CIMM/Studies/Reports/cimmp05/cimmp05-e.pdf

25 NZIS, *Settlement Pack* No. 4: Work, pp 1, 5. www.immigration.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/CDF2ACB2-BE92-4EE6-8E21-9F419FD183CD/0/IMM272804work.pdf

26 Briefing Notes: Skilled Immigration policy announcements, 1 July 2003, www.immigration.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/A645DDAC-3E40-44A1-8691-67884781022F/0/mediarelease010703briefingnotes.pdf

[The] government believes that the only true measure of success of any skilled immigration policy is the successful settlement of the migrant, who is able to 'hit the ground running' and make a successful contribution to New Zealand's social and economic well-being.²⁷

9.34 De-skilling through employment in jobs not requiring their specific skills was an important theme in evidence to the Committee.

There were 3,728 settlers arriving in Australia over the period 1997-98 to 1999-2000 who indicated that they were engineers. However, it cannot be assumed that they worked within their profession because between 1997 and 2000, there was a decline in the number of persons employed as professional engineers.²⁸

Migrants, although having gained residency in Australia through their skills, too often end up working in other industries because there is no call for their knowledge in the local marketplace.²⁹

Migrants who do not have a job offer [before migration] are more likely to be forced to accept employment below their capabilities.³⁰

In this situation, we lose continuity in our skill areas, thus falling further behind in our professions.³¹

9.35 The DIMIA review of settlement services in Australia also reported that:

the strongest messages from public consultations and submissions have been that new arrivals face considerable difficulty in obtaining employment... and see a need for more... opportunities to gain work experience in the Australian labour market.³²

27 Hon Lianne Dalziel, Skilled Immigration Policy Announcement, 1/7/03. www.beehive.govt.nz/dalziel/skilled-immigration/briefing-notes.cfm

28 B Birrell, I Dobson, V Rapson and TF Smith *Skilled Labour: Gains and Losses*, Centre for Population and Urban Research, Monash University, (2001), pp 14-16, quoted in NSW Government, Submission No. 37, p. 7.

29 Rock Resourcing, Submission No. 7, p. 2.

30 YaIe-Loehr, S. and Erhhardt, C., "Immigration and Human Capital: a theoretical, comparative and practical perspective", presented to *National Skilling: Migration Labour and the Law: An International Symposium*, University of Sydney, November 23-24, 2000. quoted in Institution of Engineers Australia, Submission No. 10, p. 16.

31 Skilled Migrant Network, Evidence, p. 180.

32 DIMIA, *Report of the Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants*, May 2003, p. 117, www.immi.gov.au/settle/settle_review/

- 9.36 Some submissions elaborated on this theme, drawing the Committee's attention to possible causes of mismatches between pre- and post-migration occupations:

Government issues permanent resident visas to skilled migrants aimed at reducing the shortage of certain skills that are in demand. However, due to a number of barriers, migrants find it very difficult to find work in their own profession and land up doing all sorts of odd jobs.³³

I have met ex-teachers, ex-engineers, ex-university lecturers, ex-professionals from other countries who are now cleaners, shoe repairmen, cab drivers because they cannot get accreditation or acknowledgement of their years of expertise.³⁴

- 9.37 These examples included not only migrants who had come to Australia under skilled migration arrangements but also others with skills who arrived under other schemes, such as family reunion or humanitarian arrangements.
- 9.38 The Committee examined data from the 2001 census for migrants with post-graduate qualifications. As Table 9.2 shows, 59 per cent were managers, administrators, professionals or associate professionals, whereas the equivalent figure for the native-born with post-graduate qualifications was 84 per cent. Migrants might therefore not be using their qualifications to their best advantage or may have experienced difficulty in having their qualifications recognised.
- 9.39 Data from LSIA provided a more detailed context for the Committee's review. Approximately one in five skilled migrants arriving in 1999/2000 reported that the main difficulty in finding work in the first six months was insufficient local experience.³⁵ This was approximately double the proportion of the unemployed in Australia identifying "insufficient work experience" as their main difficulty in finding work.³⁶

33 Mr O Dhungel, Submission No. 9, p. 1.

34 Ms K Cheng, Submission No. 16, pp. 1-2.

35 Skilled Australia Linked = 20%, Independent = 16%. DIMIA, *Difficulties in Finding Work*, Sample Reports from LSIA2, www.immi.gov.au/lisia/lisia.06.htm

36 11.6%. ABS, Yearbook Australia 2003, citing *Job Search Experience*, Australia, July 2001 (ABS pub No. 6222.0).

Table 9.2: Employment of persons with Post-Graduate Qualifications in 2001³⁷

MIGRANTS WHO ARRIVED 1995-2000						
Year of arrival	Employed in 2001 as:				Unemployed or not in the labour force	Total
	Manager ³⁸	Professional ³⁹	Associate Professional ⁴⁰	Other		
1995	422	2,043	312	559	788	4,124
1996	416	1,981	279	565	821	4,062
1997	397	1,929	267	607	910	4,110
1998	495	2,101	287	864	1,209	4,956
1999	532	2,392	342	1,035	1,685	5,986
2000	550	2,462	300	1,025	2,033	6,370
TOTAL 1995-2000	2,812	12,908	1,787	4,655	7,446	29,608
%	9.5	43.6	6.0	15.7	25.2	100

AUSTRALIAN BORN						
Total	26,627	81,502	8,645	7,329	13,466	137,667
%	19.3	59.2	6.3	5.3	9.8	100

9.40 Few of the Skilled Independent migrants had found lack of recognition of qualifications was an impediment, but for those in the Skilled-Australia Sponsored schemes, it was the second most common hurdle.⁴¹

9.41 Both Canada and New Zealand had identified lack of skill recognition as a barrier to employment under their skilled migration arrangements, although there was not always a clear division between recognition of experience and recognition of qualifications.⁴²

37 Unpublished ABS data from 2001 Census.

38 I.e.: Generalist, specialist and farm managers, farmers.

39 I.e.: Professionals in Science; Building; Engineering; Business; Information; Health & Education.

40 I.e.: Associate Professionals in Science, Engineering & Related; Business & Administration; Managing Supervisors in Sales & Service; Information, Health & Welfare. Etc.

41 DIMIA, *Difficulties in Finding Work*, Sample Reports from LSIA2, www.immi.gov.au/lisia/lisia.06.htm

42 **Canada:** *Settlement And Integration: A Sense Of Belonging "Feeling At Home"*, Report Of The Standing Committee On Citizenship And Immigration, June 2003p. 3.

www.parl.gc.ca/InfoComDoc/37/2/CIMM/Studies/Reports/cimmrp05/cimmrp05-e.pdf **New Zealand,** M. Benson-Rea, S. Rawlinson, "Highly Skilled and Business Migrants: Information Processes and Settlement Outcomes", *International Migration* Vol. 41 (2) 2003 p. 65.

Twenty-four per cent of new immigrants to **Canada** cited transferability of foreign qualifications or experience as the most critical obstacle when looking for work.⁴³ Intending migrants to **New Zealand** were advised that their previous experience would not automatically be recognised.⁴⁴

- 9.42 A 2003 International Labour Organisation paper remarked on:
- criticism... that only a third of the nurses from non-English speaking countries have their qualifications recognized immediately in Australia.⁴⁵
- 9.43 The divergence between the occupations of migrants with high level qualifications and locally-born with similar qualifications, together with evidence provided by witnesses and the LSIA data, prompted the Committee to investigate the main reported barriers to more gainful employment of skilled migrants – lack of local work experience and the lack of recognition of overseas qualifications.

Local experience

- 9.44 According to the Skilled Migrant Network:
- on being selected for visas to Australia on the basis of our skills, we arrive in the country without any previous orientation, settlement program or network to support us.⁴⁶
- 9.45 The Network's interviews with more than 100 skilled migrants who faced difficulties in finding jobs indicated that, for them:
- employers do not... recognize overseas experience and qualifications, especially from developing countries... Employment in government jobs is also difficult... overseas experience is not recognised⁴⁷
- 9.46 The Institution of Engineers Australia concluded that:
- migrants are being underutilised when they come in under the independent stream... they do not have relevant Australian experience.⁴⁸

43 Statistics Canada, Highlights of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-611-XIE/free.htm

44 NZIS, *Settlement Pack* No. 4: Work, pp 1, 5. www.immigration.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/CDF2ACB2-BE92-4EE6-8E21-9F419FD183CD/0/IMM272804work.pdf

45 P. Martin, *Highly Skilled Labor Migration: Sharing the Benefits*, International Institute for Labour Studies, Geneva 2003. www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inst/download/migration2.pdf

46 Skilled Migrant Network, Evidence, p. 180.

47 Skilled Migrant Network, Submission No. 50, p. 1.

48 Institution of Engineers, Australia, Evidence, p. 59.

- 9.47 The Victorian Government also commented on this, saying that:
- many skilled migrants face difficulties in obtaining employment... employer reluctance to accept ... overseas qualified and experienced professionals without local work experience.⁴⁹
- 9.48 DIMIA remarked to the Committee that, as to:
- whether Australian employers value that particular experience. In some instances, the evidence suggests that they do. In others, it suggests that they do not.⁵⁰
- 9.49 The Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) advised the Committee that:
- the professional recognition process, per se, does not require Australian experience.⁵¹
- 9.50 The Institution of Engineers Australia clarified some of the reasons why employers might seek local experience:
- a lot of standards in Australia are uniquely Australian. OH&S requirements in Australia are completely different from overseas. So the experience that a lot of employers require is 'How does it work in Australia', not the broader...principles.⁵²
- 9.51 This issue was thrown into sharper focus by the Skilled Migrant Network's survey which indicated that:
- as feedback for not being called for interviews by employers and recruitment agents, 99% give lack of local experience.⁵³
- 9.52 The Network's survey concentrated on skilled individuals who were still seeking employment. LSIA data, drawn from interviews with skilled migrants who had arrived in 1999/2000, confirmed that their main difficulty in finding work in the first six months was insufficient local experience.⁵⁴

49 Victorian Government, Submission No. 58, p. 3.

50 DIMIA, Evidence, p. 7.

51 Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), Evidence, p. 27.

52 Institution of Engineers, Evidence, p. 62.

53 Skilled Migrant Network, Submission No. 50, p. 1.

54 16% of Skilled Independent, 20% of Skilled-Australia Sponsored. DIMIA, *Difficulties in Finding Work*, Sample Reports from LSIA2, www.immi.gov.au/lsia/lsia.06.htm

9.53 In addition, some skilled migrants had also to gain local knowledge of:

how to write resumes and cover letters and learn interview techniques for the Australian job market⁵⁵

9.54 According to the New South Wales State Government:

The skilled migrant must choose between short-term survival over long term establishment... to accept a position that is unskilled or semi-skilled... creates a cycle of long hours, low wages, inability to pay fees for educational bridging courses or other appropriate training, and discontinuity within their professional field.⁵⁶

9.55 The Committee examined potential avenues for improving migrants' local experience.

Gaining local experience

9.56 Migrants might acquire local work experience prior to migrating. According to LSIA two thirds of primary applicants and one half of the spouses had spent time in Australia, most commonly on tourist or visitor visas.⁵⁷

9.57 The Committee recalled that the 2002 review of the temporary entry program had reported that a:

key element of Australia's temporary residence program is that temporary residents can apply for permanent visas should they wish to do so... It is... important that the pathways to permanent residence for these skilled workers are clear (eg in client information) and accessible, so that Australia can retain such workers permanently if possible.⁵⁸

9.58 According to the DIMIA website, there were 23 different visa subclasses which might permit temporary residents to work in Australia and acquire local experience.⁵⁹ In this connection the Committee considered three major groups, Students; Working Holiday Makers; and Temporary Business entrants. These groups

55 Skilled Migrant Network, Evidence, p. 180.

56 New South Wales Government, Submission No. 37, p. 8.

57 Approximately 30% were on visitor/tourist visas. DIMIA, Submission No. 25(a), Tables 15, 18. They spent three months or more in Australia prior to migrating: 3-6 months = 55.0%; 6+ months = 42.2%. DIMIA, *The Labour Force Experience of New Migrants*, 2001, p. 20 electronic version, www.immi.gov.au/research/publications/labour_force/nilsreport.pdf

58 DIMIA, *In Australia's Interests - A Review of the Temporary Residence Program*, para 2.97. www.immi.gov.au/general/temp_res_report/chapter_2.pdf

59 DIMIA, *Temporary Residence in Australia*, www.immi.gov.au/allforms/temp_res.htm

generated large numbers of visas in 2002/3⁶⁰ which might be expected to have given those visitors an opportunity to work.⁶¹

Students

9.59 One in six of the primary applicants in 1999/2000 were known to have been students in Australia.⁶² Students (162,575 visas in 2002/3) could seek permission to work only after they had commenced studies in Australia, and any local experience might therefore relate to the labour market generally, rather than to a specific field of skilled employment.⁶³

Working holiday makers

9.60 Possibly five per cent of skilled migrants had spent time in Australia on a working holiday maker visa.⁶⁴ The Working Holiday arrangements (88,758 visas in 2002/3) were restricted to people aged between 18 and 30 from countries with reciprocal agreements with Australia. The visa permitted them to holiday in Australia for 12 months and to supplement their travel funds through temporary or casual work for no more than three months with any one employer.⁶⁵

9.61 The Tourism Task Force alerted the Committee to a survey of backpackers⁶⁶ which revealed that two in every three who had been in Australia for six months or more had found temporary employment.⁶⁷

9.62 A DIMIA-sponsored study arising from an earlier Committee review of working holiday makers⁶⁸ found that 85 per cent of working holiday makers worked while in Australia, but four in five of their jobs had been low skilled.⁶⁹

9.63 If this survey reflected the experience of all those on Working Holiday visas, then approximately one in ten had worked as a professional or

60 DIMIA, *Annual Report 2002/3*, Temporary Business, p. 38; Working Holiday Program, p. 31; Students, p. 35.

61 Other temporary residence visas which might permit relevant skilled work experience were: **Occupational Trainees** – only permitted to work in a training program at least 70% workplace-based; **Employee Exchange** skilled people wanting to broaden their work experience in Australia under reciprocal arrangements. DIMIA, *Other visa options for Temporary Residence in Australia*. www.immi.gov.au/allforms/temp_res.htm; **Professional Development** in a tailored development program designed by an Australian sponsoring organisation; DIMIA, *What is the Professional Development Visa*. www.immi.gov.au/allforms/pdv/01.htm

62 DIMIA, Submission No. 25(a), Tables 15-16.

63 DIMIA, *Working While Studying*, www.immi.gov.au/study/working/index.htm

64 DIMIA, Submission No. 25(a), Tables 15-16.

65 DIMIA, *Working Holiday Makers*, www.immi.gov.au/allforms/visiting_whm.htm

66 Tourism Task Force, Submission No. 29, p. 3.

67 Banking/finance/accounting = 3.7%; Healthcare = 1.8%; Engineering = 1.7%; ICT = 1%. NT/Student Uni Travel, *Backpackers Uncovered January 2003*, Q 34., <http://atc.australia.com/cms/pdf/Backpackersjan03.pdf>

68 Joint Standing Committee on Migration, *Working Holiday Makers: More than Tourists*, August 1997.

69 G. Harding, E. Webster, *The Working Holiday Scheme and the Australian Labour Market*, Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, September 2002, pp. 5-6.

associate and three per cent as a tradesperson, so possibly 12,000 had gained experience in skilled occupations in Australia in 2002/3.

Temporary Business (Long Stay)

- 9.64 Approximately eight per cent of skilled migrants had been temporary residents prior to applying to migrate, but there were no data about the precise nature of their visas.⁷⁰ The 56,234 Temporary Business (Long Stay) visas in 2002/3 permitted Australian businesses to sponsor personnel from overseas to work in Australia temporarily for up to four years, provided that the businesses were unable to meet their skill needs from within the Australian labour force.⁷¹
- 9.65 In 2002/3 more than half of the applications for the Temporary Business (Long Stay) visa were made by people already in Australia.⁷² In his submission to the Committee, Mr B. Kinnaird cited DIMIA data which showed that one quarter were on working holidays, a further 24 per cent were tourists, and 18 per cent were on short-stay business visas.⁷³
- 9.66 In Tasmania, the Committee was informed, most skilled migrants are sponsored by employers.⁷⁴ The Committee expected that employers would not sponsor employees without some acquaintantance with their abilities. If this meant that they sponsored people who had already been working for them then, as Mr Kinnaird pointed out, those on tourist visas could not have been working lawfully because tourists were expressly prohibited from working. The Committee observed that, generally, those with short-stay business visas also “should not be employed in Australia.”⁷⁵
- 9.67 Whether or not their employment was lawful, the data indicated that these were indeed avenues through which intending skilled migrants could gain local experience which might assist them in the labour market. In 2000/1 possibly one in twenty working holiday makers was sponsored to a Temporary Business (Long Stay) visa, giving them immediate access to potentially prolonged local labour market experience.⁷⁶

70 DIMIA, Submission No. 25(a), Tables 15-16.

71 DIMIA, Temporary Business (Long Stay) visa, www.immi.gov.au/faq/temporary/temporary05.htm#how 32,568 out of 56,234. DIMIA, *Annual Report 2002/3*, p. 38.

72 Mr B. Kinnaird, Submission No. 38, p. 4.

73 Tasmanian Government, Submission No. 22, p. 3.

74 Mr B. Kinnaird, Submission No. 38, p. 4; DIMIA, *Frequently Asked Questions: Tourist/holiday visa*, www.immi.gov.au/faq/visitor/visitor01.htm#have; *Can I undertake paid employment while holding a Business visa (Short Stay)?* www.immi.gov.au/faq/visitor/visitor04.htm#undertake

75 76,500 working Holiday Maker visas were issued and 3,165 Working Holiday Makers were sponsored to a Business Short-stay Visa. DIMIA, *Annual Report 2000/01*, p. 35; Mr B. Kinnaird, Submission No. 38, p. 4.

9.68 In its 2001 review of State-specific Migration Mechanisms the Committee commented on another role of the Temporary Business (Long Stay) visa which was its function as an avenue to permanent settlement.⁷⁷ In 2002/3 nearly 7,000 holders of Temporary Business (Long Stay) visas applied for permanent residence.⁷⁸

9.69 Not all skilled migrants had, or would have been able to use such opportunities to gain local experience. Those without prior experience would, according to DIMIA's analysis of LSIA, discover that:

lack of local experience...is likely to be a temporary problem, and suggests that many of those who were looking for work... would be likely to find a job... as they gain local knowledge.⁷⁹

9.70 The Committee was sceptical of this apparently optimistic claim and therefore examined the on-shore resources currently available to assist skilled migrants to enter the job market through providing access to local experience.

Post-arrival opportunities

9.71 For the minority using the internet⁸⁰ DIMIA's *Immigration Portal* operated primarily as a gateway to immigration information for people living in Australia and provided information about job-seeking.⁸¹

9.72 The National Integrated Settlement Strategy (NISS) provided a planning framework within which Commonwealth, State/Territory and local government agencies, and community organisations work together. They provide migrants, refugees and humanitarian entrants with services essential to their settlement and to help them to access those services when they need them so that they become independent, productive members of the community as quickly as possible.⁸²

77 Joint Standing Committee on Migration, *New Faces, New Places: Review of State-specific Migration Mechanisms*, August 2001, Chapters 4 and 7.

78 6,953: DIMIA, *Annual Report 2002/03*, p. 39.

79 DIMIA, *The Labour force Experience of New Migrants*, p. 57, electronic version, www.immi.gov.au/research/publications/labour_force/nilsreport.pdf

80 37 % of the Australian population, ABS Publication No. 2056.0, *Australia Online: How Australians are using Computers and the Internet 2001*.

81 DIMIA, <http://immigrationportal.gov.au>, following prompts to *Information for newly arrived migrants > Frequently asked questions > How do I find work in Australia?*

82 Strategy components include: Annual Federal/State/Territory **Ministerial Council on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs**; DIMIA/State/Territory/ Local Government Association officials' **Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs**; and Inter-departmental working groups at the State/Territory/national level. DIMIA Fact Sheet 93 *The National Integrated Settlement Strategy*.

- 9.73 The DIMIA Community Settlement Services Scheme provided funding to not-for-profit community organisations and local government bodies to deliver settlement service to newly arrived migrants and refugees experiencing significant barriers to settlement.⁸³ Through the Migrant Resource Centre/Migrant Service Agency network migrants were offered settlement information, orientation and referral services.⁸⁴
- 9.74 The Committee noted that these resources catered for migrants facing significant obstacles to settlement. The priority client groups for DIMIA in 2003 were refugee and humanitarian entrants; migrants living in rural and regional areas; small and emerging migrant communities; and migrant groups with additional settlement needs.⁸⁵
- 9.75 Such settlement service priorities were not relevant to those in the skilled migration stream who had been specifically selected because of their ability to “quickly make a contribution to the Australian economy”.⁸⁶ Consequently, as DIMIA indicated to the Committee:
- most specialised settlement services do not serve skilled migrant categories.⁸⁷
- 9.76 The Northern Territory commented on this, attributing it to the focus on:
- providing settlement services to new and emerging communities and humanitarian entrants. The earlier concept of settlement services for life appears to have changed to short to medium term assistance and moving migrants into mainstream services.⁸⁸
- 9.77 As the New South Wales Government explained, those services could be of limited utility because:
- skilled migrants resident in Australia for less than 2 years are not eligible for the full range of Job Network Services. Job Network services are not staffed or funded adequately to meet additional needs of skilled migrants.⁸⁹

www.immi.gov.au/facts/93niss.htm

83 DIMIA, Community Settlement Services Scheme, www.immi.gov.au/grants/csss.htm

84 DIMIA, Fact Sheet 92. *Migrant Community Services*, www.immi.gov.au/facts/92funding.htm

85 DIMIA, Community Settlement Services Scheme, www.immi.gov.au/grants/csss.htm

86 DIMIA, General Skilled Migration to Australia, www.immi.gov.au/migration/skilled/index.htm

87 DIMIA, Submission No. 25, p. 66.

88 Northern Territory Government, Submission No. 40, p. 5.

89 New South Wales Government, Submission No. 37, pp. 6-7.

- 9.78 DIMIA, however, advised visitors to its website that:
- Job Network can immediately help newly-arrived migrants, who are subject to the two-year waiting period, to find a job through Job Matching, and referrals for overseas skills recognition.⁹⁰
- 9.79 The Committee's research indicated that the potential assistance with gaining local work experience depended on the approach taken in individual communities. Centrelink in Wagga Wagga, for example, held local job workshops for migrants.⁹¹ The Illawarra Migrant Resource Centre provided links on its website to other sites covering settling in Australia; recognition of qualifications; job vacancies and education opportunities.⁹²
- 9.80 Fremantle's South Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre offered "JobLink" which included a free job matching service for employers as well as employment counselling and advocacy, work experience, assistance with resumes, job applications and an "Introduction to Australian business culture" for migrants.⁹³
- 9.81 The Fremantle website was funded by the Western Australian Department of Training. In its evidence the Department described a number of Government initiatives designed to ease the settlement process for skilled migrants. Their strategy was intended to achieve:
- a positive settlement experience and improve Australia's ability to compete in the global arena.⁹⁴
- 9.82 As Western Australia attracted higher proportions of skilled migrants than might be predicted from its proportion of the total Australian population,⁹⁵ the Committee noted other aspects of the program which included activities by the Department's Overseas Qualification Unit such as:
- assessment and bridging programs assisting overseas-trained nurses and child care workers into employment;
 - Recognition of Prior Learning Orientation Program for Overseas Qualified Teachers at Murdoch University; and

90 DIMIA, *Employment*, www.immi.gov.au/settle/work/employment.htm

91 *New job workshop for migrants in Wagga Wagga*, New South Wales Media Release, 12 May 2003,

92 Illawarra Migrant Resource Centre. www.imrc.org.au/index.html

93 South Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre. www.fmrc.asn.au/

94 Western Australian Government, Submission No. 33, p. 4.

95 WA proportion of the Australian population = 9.8% (ABS, *Yearbook 2003*). WA 2001/02 Skilled intake as a proportion of total Australian: Sponsored = 14.4%; Employer nominated= 16.2%; Business=26.8; Independent 16.3%. DIMIA, *Immigration Update 2001-2002*, p. 11.

- development of good practice recognition and assessment procedures for overseas trained teachers in Western Australia.⁹⁶
- 9.83 Another source of assistance for skilled migrants was the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). In Western Australia, its Migrant Pathways Program targeted migrants and refugees with skills in aged care, nursing, engineering and information technology and provided them with skills recognition and fast-tracked certificate level courses with English language support.⁹⁷
- 9.84 AMEP was provided through DIMIA to help newly-arrived migrants and refugees settle successfully in Australia by providing basic English language tuition to migrants and refugees from non-English speaking backgrounds. In 2002 only 13 per cent of AMEP participants nationally were skilled migrants because principal applicants under that arrangement were generally required to have vocational English and therefore not have such a need for language tuition. However, the migrants' dependants could also use AMEP.⁹⁸
- 9.85 In some States AMEP providers were also associated with work experience placements as part of their employment-oriented programs.⁹⁹ Mr Diaz-Chavarro, a skilled migrant, praised the "excellent" Overseas Qualified Professional Program run by Victoria's Adult Multicultural Education Service (an AMEP provider).¹⁰⁰ The program included work experience and it reported that 72 per cent of participants in it found employment in their profession or in an allied field.¹⁰¹
- 9.86 The New South Wales "Skillmax" program aimed to assist overseas trained people to better use and further develop their skills and qualifications through placements in State Government agencies and NSW universities.¹⁰²

96 Western Australian Government, Submission No. 33, p. 4.

97 Western Australian Government, Submission No. 33, p. 4.

98 4,236 of 32,074 AMEP participants in calendar year 2002. 1,101 dependants of skilled migrants were registered in 2001-02, DIMIA, *Adult Migrant English Program*. www.immi.gov.au/amep/links1.htm, Submission No. 25, p. 65.

99 SA: *Work Experience Placement*, LM Training Specialists. www.languagecentre.com.au; Vic: *Overseas Qualified Professional Program*. www.ames.net.au/articleZone.asp?articleZoneID=285#Article-30

100 M Diaz-Chavarro, Submission No. 2, p. 3.

101 *Overseas Qualified Professional Program*. www.ames.net.au/articleZone.asp?articleZoneID=285#Article-30

102 www.eeo.nsw.gov.au/migrant

- 9.87 The Victorian Government funded programs and services to provide:
labour market orientation, qualification assessment and work experience for recently arrived overseas-qualified professionals, whether entering through skilled, family or humanitarian streams.¹⁰³
- 9.88 Submissions to the Committee urged that:
- employers be made more aware of the opportunities for employing skilled migrants;¹⁰⁴
 - private companies be given some financial incentive to employ skilled migrants as is the case for trainees;¹⁰⁵
 - cross cultural training should be provided to skilled migrants to help them to present themselves favourably to Australian employers and recruitment agencies;¹⁰⁶
 - local support networks be created;¹⁰⁷
 - short term bridging programs be provided for skilled migrants;¹⁰⁸
 - tailored job-matching services or services be implemented to gain Australian work experience for each migrant;
 - existing skilled streams be replaced in favour of the employer nominated streams;¹⁰⁹
 - more funding for existing programs for migrants be provided;¹¹⁰ and
 - there be better coordination of notification of employment opportunities nationally.¹¹¹

103 Victorian Government, Submission No. 58, p. 3.

104 Western Australian Government, Submission No. 33, pp. 4-5; Skilled Migrant Network, Submission No. 50, p. 2; Queensland Government Submission No. 27, p. 4; Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, Submission No. 52, p. 3.

105 Skilled Migrant Network, Submission No. 50, p. 3.

106 Skilled Migrant Network, Submission No. 50, p. 3.

107 Mr O Dhungel, Submission No. 9, p.1; Skilled Migrant Network, Submission No. 50, p. 3.

108 Western Australian Government, Submission No. 33, pp 4-5; Skilled Migrant Network, Submission No. 50, p. 3; City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Submission No. 36, p. 1, suggested "A program similar to the "New Apprenticeships" program currently on offer where recognition of prior learning is available would be appropriate within the mining industry".

109 Institution of Engineers Australia, Evidence, p. 57.

110 "They are under resourced to deal with all the skilled migrants in need of their service. There is a long waiting list for each program", Skilled Migrant Network, Submission No. 50, p. 2. "expand... the NSW public sector Migrant Work Experience Program", Institution of Engineers Australia, Submission 10, p. 16.

111 Skilled Migrant Network, Submission No. 50, p. 3.

Local experience - conclusion

- 9.89 The Committee concluded that migrants' local experience assisted in realising optimum employment outcomes for the benefit of migrants and Australia.
- 9.90 The Committee considered that opportunities for intending migrants to gain local experience through temporary migration prior to taking the personally formidable step of permanently leaving home should be more clearly set out. The Committee therefore supports the conclusion of the DIMIA External Reference Group in its review of the temporary residence program that it was:
- important that the pathways to permanent residence for these skilled workers are clear (eg in client information) and accessible.¹¹²
- 9.91 Opportunities for newly arrived skilled migrants to gain local experience existed but, in the Committee's view, information about them was often not readily accessible. A skilled migrant, for example, by definition and through the selection process would have English language skills. Yet they would be unlikely to guess that the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) or the Adult Multicultural Education Service (AMES) would provide information about work experience opportunities.
- 9.92 The Committee considered giving higher prominence to the work experience opportunities which were already made available through programs such as AMES and AMEP and the proposals put to it suggesting ways of facilitating skilled migrants' acquisition of local experience.
- 9.93 It was the Committee's view that facilitation of migrants' employment had been examined in depth in the review of settlement services which was published in May 2003. The Committee therefore endorses its recommendation that:
- agencies funded under the Commonwealth's *Australians Working Together* initiative develop new service options for migrants and humanitarian entrants, including mature-aged workers, which allow them to gain work experience early on

112 DIMIA, *Temporary Residence Program Review: Report of the 2000-02 review*, para 2.97.
www.immi.gov.au/general/review.htm

in their job search, with scope to combine work experience with English language and other training elements.¹¹³

Recognition of overseas qualifications

9.94 The 2003 *Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants* noted that:

skills recognition remains a major issue for new arrivals.¹¹⁴

9.95 Australian inquiries into this barrier to effective employment of migrants' skills in just the past two decades included:

- *The Recognition of Overseas Qualifications in Australia*, Fry Committee of Inquiry into Recognition of Overseas Qualifications (1982);
- *Wasted Skills: Barriers to Migrant Entry to Occupations in Australia*, R. Iredale, Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW, (1987);
- *Recognition of Overseas Qualifications*, NSW Committee of Inquiry (1989);
- *Commonwealth Legal and Administrative Powers in Overseas Skills Recognition*, National Advisory Committee on Skills Recognition (1991);
- *The Race to Qualify*, NSW Committee of Inquiry into the Employment of Medical Practitioners (1998).¹¹⁵

9.96 Not surprisingly, this perennial issue for migrants was raised with the Committee during its present review. The New South Wales Government identified as one of the barriers to the speedy entry of skilled migrants into the workforce and to appropriate skill level utilisation the:

lack of official explanations of the difference between being accepted skilled migration visa and gaining accreditation in to practice one's profession.¹¹⁶

9.97 Some two per cent of settlers responding to LSIA reported that the lack or recognition of their qualifications or lack of training created

113 Recommendation 10, DIMIA, *Report of the Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants*, May 2003, p. 124, www.immi.gov.au/settle/settle_review

114 DIMIA, *Report of the Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants*, May 2003, p. 125, www.immi.gov.au/settle/settle_review/

115 All cited in: Australian Doctors Trained Overseas Association, *Submission to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) on the Royal Australian College of Surgeons (RACS) Application for Authorisation of its Processes*, May 2001.

116 New South Wales Government, Submission No. 37, pp. 6-7.

difficulties in finding work in their first six months in Australia. After 18 months the proportion had shrunk to one per cent.

- 9.98 As most of the skilled migrants were employed, those proportions indicated to the Committee that lack of recognition of skills was not a major or permanent barrier to employment and, as the LSIA results showed, most used their qualifications all the time.¹¹⁷
- 9.99 A core reason for the migrants' anxiety, it seemed to the Committee, was the contradiction in the migration process. Skilled migrants required post-secondary qualifications to be able to apply to migrate. The points test rewarded them for the skills which were the end product of the qualifications. But they then had to gain permission to use those skills in Australia.
- 9.100 The DIMIA *General Skilled Migration* booklet warned that:
- for many jobs in Australia job applicants must be able to be registered with an Australian State authority and/or be eligible for membership of a professional or industry organisation... you should find out whether any special requirements or conditions apply to jobs you might want to do.¹¹⁸
- 9.101 One third of the migrants contributing to LSIA said that they had required information about recognition of qualifications.¹¹⁹
- 9.102 An example of the process to be undertaken by migrants was set out in the entry for the Australian Pharmacy Examining Council (APEC) in the pages devoted to *The Skills Assessment Process* in DIMIA's Skilled Occupations List.
- 9.103 Intending migrants were advised that they were required to have their qualifications recognised by APEC prior to applying to migrate, and that pharmacy degrees obtained in the UK, Ireland and New Zealand and a licence to practice in UK, Ireland and New Zealand were immediately acceptable to registering authorities. This implied that registration was required if the migrant wished to practice in Australia, but did not specifically state that pharmacists must be registered with their local State/Territory authority to practice lawfully.¹²⁰

117 Independent = 58%, ENS/Business = 62%, DIMIA, *The Labour force Experience of New Migrants*, p. 65, electronic version. www.immi.gov.au/research/publications/labour_force/nilsreport.pdf

118 DIMIA, *General Skilled Migration* booklet, p. 47.

119 NILS, *Life in a New Land: The Experience of Migrants in Wave 1 of LSIA1 and LSIA2*, p. 236. www.immi.gov.au/research/publications/lsia/index.htm

120 Australian Pharmacy Examining Council. www.apec.asn.au/geninfo.htm

- 9.104 To be eligible to be registered in Australia, intending migrants were advised that they must:
- have completed the equivalent of a three-year full-time pharmacy course;
 - be eligible to be registered in the country in which they gained their qualification; and
 - undertake an examination process conducted by APEC.
- 9.105 The four-stage registration process began with a written multiple choice question examination. On successful completion of this, APEC provided the relevant skills assessment required for migration purposes.
- 9.106 The intending migrant had not yet completed the process leading to registration. This comprised:
- interview and counselling;
 - a period of supervised practice in an Australian pharmacy; and
 - a practical and oral examination conducted in Australia.
- 9.107 The last two steps could only be undertaken in Australia, but successful completion did not guarantee that the migrant would then be able to be registered because the local State/Territory authorities might impose additional requirements.¹²¹
- 9.108 The Committee chose to examine the APEC example because its summary in the DIMIA document alerted a potential migrant to both the process and potential delays involved in becoming a pharmacist in Australia. This was in contrast to other summaries of professional skills assessment processes, some of which were less informative or, in the case of 14 of the 33 listed accreditation bodies, non-existent.¹²² Only the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council, for example, explicitly stated that “to practice... you must be registered” in its entry on the SOL.¹²³
- 9.109 In the Committee’s view, omissions of basic information compromised the usefulness of the DIMIA *Skilled Occupations List* for skilled workers contemplating moving to Australia and encountering

121 DIMIA, *Skilled Occupations List*, p.19. www.immi.gov.au/allforms/pdf/1121i.pdf

122 DIMIA, *Skilled Occupations List*, has contact details for 33 national assessing bodies, but only 19 provide outlines of the skills assessment process. p.13-15 and 16-22 respectively. www.immi.gov.au/allforms/pdf/1121i.pdf

123 DIMIA, *Skilled occupations list*, p. 19, <http://www.immi.gov.au/allforms/pdf/1121i.pdf>

an explanation of the Australian concept of a skilled occupation for the first time.

- 9.110 The need for such information was highlighted by a migrant medical practitioner who outlined for the Committee what, in retrospect, had been needed, but had not been available in applying to work as a doctor:

Since my arrival here I have answered numerous enquiries from doctors both here and in the UK trying to find out what the process of coming to work here involves... The stages include obtaining:

- a suitable post
- working visa – either temporary or permanent
- medical registration
- recognition of qualifications by professional colleges
- provider number and prescriber number from Medicare – prerequisites are visa and registration
- medical indemnity insurance

It should be possible to have all this organised prior to arrival in Australia, but I have yet to meet a doctor who has achieved this. The resulting delay in starting work can mean financial hardship at a time when outgoings are high as deposits are needed and purchases made. This flowchart should be supplemented by a booklet which outlines the roles of the Medical Boards, the professional colleges, DIMA, HIC etc.¹²⁴

- 9.111 The Committee was heartened to hear from a number of professional organisations that they were addressing the specifics of skill recognition through international agreements, on-shore training and, within Australia, attempts to align the varying requirements of the States and Territories.
- 9.112 The Australian Nursing Council had developed consistent standards and policies for recognition of overseas nurses enabling nurses registered in an overseas country to gain immediate registration in Australia. Other nurses in countries outside that agreement could be required to demonstrate English language proficiency by undertaking an English language test, successfully complete a competency-based assessment program in Australia and/or come to Australia to

complete a migrant bridging program before being eligible for registration and migration.¹²⁵

- 9.113 The Institution of Engineers Australia had formal agreements with engineering accreditation bodies in other countries through its *Washington* and *Sydney Accords* under which engineering accreditation bodies recognise as equivalent the engineering courses of study in a number of countries.¹²⁶
- 9.114 The Speech Pathology Association of Australia was reviewing the possibility for mutual recognition of qualifications with UK, Canada and USA.¹²⁷

Recognition of overseas qualifications- Conclusion

- 9.115 From the intending migrant's viewpoint, the Committee concludes, it would be beneficial to specify which occupations require registration when this issue is first raised in the Skilled Migration booklet.
- 9.116 There would also be an opportunity to clarify the process and the varying State/Territory requirements and potential outcomes as part of the information incorporated in the Skilled Occupations List.

Recommendation 12

- 9.117 **The Committee recommends that the General Skilled Migration booklet list the skilled occupations and migration occupations in demand which require migrants to be registered prior to practising in Australia.**

Recommendation 13

- 9.118 **The Committee recommends that DIMIA seek the cooperation of assessing authorities in providing migrant-oriented summaries of their Australian assessment, post-arrival obligations, and registration requirements in its Skilled Occupations List publication.**

125 Australian Nursing Council, Submission No. 15, pp 1-2; Submission 15a, pp. 1-2.

126 *Washington: Accord* Australia, Canada, Hong Kong SAR, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States of America and Japan. *Sydney Accord*: Australia, Hong Kong China, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa and the United Kingdom. Institution of Engineers Australia, Submission No. 10, pp. 14-15.

127 Speech Pathology Association, Submission No. 11, p. 2.

Recommendation 14

- 9.119 **The Committee recommends that assessing bodies continue to seek harmonisation of registration requirements across the States and Territories.**
- 9.120 These recommendations found parallels in the *Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants* which recommended that:
- DIMIA, AEI-NOOSR and Trades Recognition Australia seek to engage key stakeholders in the development of streamlined arrangements for obtaining information about skills assessment in all States/Territories.
 - AEI-NOOSR and Trades Recognition Australia consider the scope to provide more targeted assistance to groups of permanent Australian resident overseas-trained professionals and tradespeople, including humanitarian entrants.
 - DIMIA, in collaboration with AEI -NOOSR Trades Recognition Australia, the Department of Family and Community Services and Centrelink review information provision, including pre-embarkation information, about skills recognition processes to prospective and newly-arrived migrants...¹²⁸
- 9.121 The Committee endorses these recommendations.

Conclusion

- 9.122 An initial examination of the skilled permanent migration arrangements could give the impression of a lop-sided bargain under which migrants are asked to clear demanding hurdles to qualify to come to Australia but are offered no guarantee that they would be able to resume their careers or use their skills.
- 9.123 However, it appeared to the Committee that criteria for selection were generally appropriate because the detailed data from LSIA showed that skilled migrants generally entered the labour force quickly, and

¹²⁸ Recommendations 11-13, DIMIA, *Report of the Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants, May 2003*, p. 130. www.immi.gov.au/settle/settle_review

were employed within 18 months in jobs which required their qualifications.

- 9.124 The Committee acknowledged that there were exceptions to this among migrants in the skill stream. Those with skills who arrived under other arrangements, such as the humanitarian or family arrangements did not have to meet the skilled migration thresholds and therefore may have found greater difficulty in settling.
- 9.125 In that context, the Committee viewed with interest the **New Zealand** experiment in requiring skilled migrants to have a job or job offer in New Zealand before they became eligible for selection. The program had only recently begun when the Committee reported so it could not determine, for example, whether the job requirement meant that skilled migrants found employment appropriate to their skills and qualifications.
- 9.126 The Committee also considered that the **Canadian** scheme, which was a more laissez faire approach requiring potential rather than specific skills, would exacerbate the employment problems if transferred to the smaller Australian economy.
- 9.127 A 2003 International Labour Organisation paper commented that:
- Australia has been a leader in trying to minimize brain waste, using “competency-based” assessments of migrant skills; the theory is to assess competency, not necessary educational qualifications.¹²⁹
- 9.128 The Committee observed that its Canadian counterpart, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, when examining the recognition of credentials and foreign experience, recorded that:
- the government of Australia has established offices that coordinate the assessment of foreign credentials for their federal, state and territorial governments, as well as the various independent professional bodies. The Committee recommends that the federal government in Canada establish a similar office.¹³⁰
- 9.129 The Committee took these as endorsements of the approach used in Australia, but not necessarily of the detailed processes. Some of these,

129 P. Martin, *Highly Skilled Labor Migration: Sharing the Benefits*, International Institute for Labour Studies, Geneva 2003. www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inst/download/migration2.pdf

130 Canada, Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, *Settlement And Integration: A Sense Of Belonging - "Feeling At Home"*, p. 12. www.parl.gc.ca/InfoComDoc/37/2/CIMM/Studies/Reports/cimmrp05/cimmrp05-e.pdf

as the Committee recommends above, require attention in order to improve their facilitation of skilled migrant settlement.

