

Hon Peter Dutton MP  
Minister for Immigration and Border Protection

1<sup>st</sup> December 2017

Subject: Australia's Visa System and the Italian Community

Dear Minister Dutton,

Com.It.Es South Australia is the peak representative body for the Italian citizens living abroad in South Australia. We are enacted under Italian law and serve those who live in Australia, as we are elected by the Italian community every five-years. At the moment there are nearly 17,000 Italian citizens registered with the consulate whom we directly represent this population (this number is expected to be much higher as many Italians living in South Australia have not registered their children or spouses).

We are deeply concerned for the many Italian migrants coming to Australia in pursuit of a greater way of life given the current difficulties that exist in Italy. Many of these people come with a vast array of qualifications and expertise than can deeply provide not only a positive opportunity for them, but also to the many Australian employers who are benefitting from their skills and work ethics. In South Australia alone there are numerous businesses that have grown significantly, creating additional employment opportunities for Australians, as a result of the entry of this cohort.

South Australia, as you know, has been given "regional" status by your Department as it has always struggled to attract and retain skilled workers. Employers have used the 457 transition pathway and the RSMS program as a way to meet their skill needs often relying on international students to fill skills gaps on completion of their studies. Whilst the effect of the changes may have little impact on the Eastern states, the impact for South Australia will be devastating.

However, in light of the recent changes to the immigration program and in particular to the 457 Visa and other employer sponsored visa programs, we have received much feedback from members of the Italian community about the issues that this now poses for them as they seek to build a future in Australia. Many Italian-Australians have also put forward their discontent with the changes as it

affects their businesses which rely on overseas workers (as the local community don't wish to apply for these types of jobs). Furthermore, we have also hosted a series of public consultation meetings with members of the local community in South Australia, including migration professionals, and with our counterpart bodies, and below are some of the issues we have noted with the current proposed changes to the VISA system. We would urge a review of this as the changes also have a damaging effect on local businesses, including migration professionals, interpreters/ translators, training organisations, landlords and more. Based on our extensive consultation process below we provide some of the major issues highlighted during these meetings:


- The lack of pathways to permanent residence for Hospitality Managers and Cooks is of serious concern. Cooks are essential and valuable workers in restaurants as are managers. Employers have used the pathway to permanent residence as a way to attract and retain skilled workers.
- Employers struggling to fill skills gaps are feeling unsupported by the Government as their recently lodged applications for 457 visas are being assessed under new rules. Businesses made decisions to sponsor skilled workers believing they would have the employee for at least 4 years and were able to attract the best candidates by offering a 'transition' pathway to permanent residence. Now their sponsorship has been reduced to 2 years (or in some instances the occupation is no longer available at all) and the pathway to permanent residence has been removed. The result is that the nominated staff are reconsidering their options knowing that they will not have an opportunity to settle permanently in Australia.
- Many employers have built and grown their businesses on the ethnicity and abilities of their international employees. These employers claim that for them to lose their sponsored workers will result in them possibly having to close or down size their businesses. Such a result will lead to loss of jobs for the many Australians they employ.
- Employers are concerned for their existing 457 visa holders to whom they promised permanent residence after 2 years using the transition pathway. Some employees will not

meet the new mandatory English requirements which was introduced in July 2017 and this is distressing.

- The lack of pathway to permanent residence for VET sector graduates will impact the VET sector. The only occupation for which students can apply for the graduate visa is the occupation of 'Chef'. This 18-month visa however will still not give them the 2 years' full time experience they need for sponsorship and therefore graduates will be short at least 6 months for employer sponsorship.
- Many employers rely on international students and working holiday makers to fill skills gaps in their businesses. Restaurant owners claim that some of their best employees have come through the pathway of a student visa or working holiday.
- Employers in rural and remote parts of South Australia in particular, are concerned with the changes to the Regional Sponsored Migration Program, which as a result of the change to the eligible occupations list and the introduction of the TSMIT, will make it almost impossible for them to employ, attract and retain skilled workers.

On behalf of the Italian community of South Australia we request that the Government reconsider some of the changes implemented as we can see the impact these changes will have not only for the Italians wanting to start a new-life here in Australia, but also to the existing Australian businesses who rely on overseas workers for their work and the potential impact this has on them and their future livelihood. We hope you consider our submission and we would be happy to discuss this with you and your department if further information is required on the issue. We thank you for your time.

Kindest Regards,



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Christian Verdicchio

President Com.It.Es South Australia