



Australian Federation
of Islamic Councils

The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Inc

Submission to

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Migration

**With respect to terms of reference 1(a)
and 2 of the:**

*Inquiry into Australia's skilled migration
program*



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Introduction:

The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils is the peak national body for Australia's active Muslim councils, societies and associations. AFIC's membership is tiered with local societies forming state councils and the state councils that are elected by the member societies represent those societies with the national body that is AFIC.

AFIC has been serving humanity from within Australia for 57 years, having established as well as having contributed to the establishment of schools, community centres and Imam remunerations.

The Terms of Reference:

AFIC would like to submit the following in relation to terms of reference 1 and 2, which are:

1. The purpose of the skilled migration program and whether it is meeting its intended objectives, including
 - 1a) if any immediate adjustments are necessary in the context of the future of work and pandemic recovery, and
 - 1b) if more long-term structural changes are warranted;
2. Australia's international competitiveness in attracting entrepreneurs, venture capital, startups, and the best and brightest skilled migrants with cutting edge skills;

AFIC's submission:

The Skilled Migration Program (SMP) is intended to fill jobs that cannot be filled by Australian citizens due to a shortage in the Australian labour market. It is intended that these jobs will contribute more to the Australian economy and lead to the creation of further jobs in Australia or that these jobs will provide a necessary service that will further upskill Australians so that they can contribute more to nation building and to the Australian economy.

There are many industries that require more skilled individuals than what we presently have in Australia. As a result, employers advertise jobs for international applicants. This system can be streamlined to eliminate unnecessary waiting periods. Every moment's delay for industry is a loss to the economy and to the consumers. Many of our member societies face challenges when searching for qualified Arabic speaking teachers and Imams. There is a shortage in Australia of both. The current process creates unnecessary delays.



In like manner, there are many skilled individuals who came into Australia under other programs such as family reunion or humanitarian entry. There are qualified doctors who served in other countries who are not able to get the relevant registrations in Australia. There are engineers, architects, lawyers and other professionals whose skills and experience could be put to good use in Australia.

The government needs to find solutions that will enable Australia to benefit both the skilled individual and the nation that has adopted them. We must explore ways and means to:

- 1 – Motivate these individuals to acquire gap-skills¹ to enable them to apply their skills in Australia and at the same time,
- 2 – Remove or minimise the obstacles that prevent them from applying their skills in Australia.

There are 5 keys to success in any society, these are:

- 1 – The ability to communicate effectively.
- 2 – Cultural appreciation so that a person has a rounded understanding of cultural nuances and is able to react to differing cultural expressions appropriately.
- 3 – Social adaptability and learning amiability skills.
- 4 – Learning not to take things personally, especially criticism and jokes.
- 5 – Basic awareness of our laws, especially those laws that relate to defamation and the rights of others.

Presently, these areas are not adequately addressed and courses need to be developed for new migrants, especially skilled migrants to nurture these skills. This will allow them to fit in quickly, contribute quickly and prosper quickly. Those coming from societies that emphasise age-appropriate respect will need to especially learn to negotiate around the aforementioned five points.

In order for Australia to attract entrepreneurs and start up capital, it must focus on the very factors that are important to entrepreneurs and capitalists.

- 1 – Capitalists require safety for their investments.
- 2 – A high chance of good return on their investments.

¹ Gap-skills are skills that fell the gap or deficiency between what they acquired elsewhere and what is needed to meet Australian standards.



3 – A good overview of our taxation system and incentives programs. Especially, an understanding how our taxes bring back benefit to society including the investor.

4 – Tariff protection for local industries.

5 – Incentives to value add to local inventions.

6 – A paradigm shift from being an exporter of raw materials to a nation that adds value and exports finished or semi-finished products.

Australia cannot continue to rely on exporting natural resource only to buy back the value-added products at highly increased mark-ups. Past policies have unfortunately encouraged our Australian entrepreneurs to take their money and invest in manufacturing infrastructure in other countries like China. We are buying back these products at increased mark-up. The cost of opening these products to the international market (because of cheap labour and mass-production in another country) is outweighed by other factors such as loss of unskilled jobs and diminishing regional influence. Our wealth has made other nations strong to the point that some are becoming politically hostile to Australia and banning the import of some of our products in order to force us to capitulate on some of our national values. This will have an impact on our national security and our economy. Being dependent on another nation for our vehicles and their spare parts and for other essentials that we no longer manufacture in Australia detracts entrepreneurs rather than attracts them. Without protections, we will be competing with other nations for the investment of these entrepreneurs. We must reclaim our manufacturing sector and make it attractive for investors to rebuild it. This requires the creation of salient long-term benefits and protections.

Authorised by Dr Rateb Jneid, President

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