

THE SKILLS SHORTAGE and IMMIGRATION

Perhaps I have been working in the field of migration too long and am becoming cynical about the manner in which the Department has over the last few years made significant changes to the program without consultation with the main interest groups that I am missing the point.

However, the latest decision taken by them is one that again is simply a reaction to a situation that had been occurring for many months, and which they were fully aware of that. Not only does penalise families whom have paid money and jumped through the hoops to be told at the last stage of the visa process, sorry your visa is to be refused, it again denies Australian employers of badly needed skills.

I am referring to the following advice issued to Registered Australian Migration Agents by their peer body, the Migration Institute of Australia on 3 December 2007,

DIAC have advised that from Friday 30 November, no State or Territory Government is actively participating in arrangements that allow allocation of 5 bonus points to GSM applicants who deposited \$100,000 in a nominated deposit for term of at least 12 months under Part 8 of the Schedule 6A General Points Test.

This follows recent newspaper reports alleging a "scam" involving unauthorised loans to some hundreds of applicants. DIAC has been progressively advising applicants that State Governments were declining to be involved in the arrangements and directing clients to the remaining states involved. We understand that South Australia "pulled out" last week and is advising clients that it will only honour its letters to individuals who had been invited to lodge a nominated deposit.

The MIA understands that many individual applicants have been in process for lengthy periods will not get the bonus points because, notwithstanding having applied under an expectation that they would be able to deposit funds, they cannot now find a State/Territory Government prepared to continue to participate in the arrangements. Only a very small number of people are likely to have received letters from State Governments allowing them to deposit at least \$100,000 in a gazetted designated security for a term of at least 12 months in the name of the applicant or the applicant and family members. Everyone else, regardless of when they lodged their visa application, will "miss out" on the opportunity to get the 5 bonus points.

DIAC has also advised that there is also no intention to gazette other designated securities (eg Commonwealth Bonds), effectively ending these bonus point arrangements.

What this means is that there are an untold number of applicants who will now be informed that their applications have been refused unless there is some way around the impasse. The Department cannot say it was not aware that there was problems with these designated investments until recently, as the States have been gradually withdrawing from the scheme. Was there any warning issued before this month, the answer is a flat no.

When the current problem is added to the sudden refusal to assess on-the-job training for tradespeople, and recent changes to the skilled program it is very

apparent to those looking at migrating to Australia that they should forget about it as it is all just too hard.

Is this the message we should be sending out, I think not?

Lance Fee
Registered Australian Migration Agent 90067
Director of Live Downunder and The Migration Group.