

Press release: For immediate release

11 November 2010

Family Sponsorship Decimated by New Points Test

Changes will harm migrant community support networks

Australians wishing to sponsor overseas relatives will soon find it even more difficult under changes to the Skilled Migration Program that are scheduled to go into effect on 1 July 2011. As a result, there will be significantly more settlement issues for migrants who will arrive without a family network to draw upon.

Mark Webster, Director of Acacia Immigration Australia, a Sydney firm specialising in immigration law, says under the current system, people with a relative in Australia can be sponsored for skilled migration and receive a basic orientation when they arrive. They can also be given help to find a job and to purchase or lease a residence.

According to Mr Webster, the value of a family support network for migrants was never discussed publicly prior to the announcement of the changes. And while it may be difficult, if not impossible, to quantify the many positive effects of having family in Australia, the benefits cannot be overlooked. The ability to help make it easier for relatives to migrate to Australia by sponsoring them for skilled migration is a basic expectation that many Australians have previously taken for granted.

“Under the new skilled migration points test, relatives are not able to sponsor for permanent skilled visas,” asserts Webster, “as a result, it will be really difficult to help a brother, sister or other close relative to migrate to Australia,” he says.

“This will certainly affect the growth of community support networks, and I would expect that more migrants will find the move to Australia too difficult and return to their home country after a few years.

“I admire people who make the move to Australia from an overseas country – often they are thousands of miles from home and operating in a very different culture to what they are used to. Migrants have to find a home, a job and put the kids in school. The process is much easier with the support of close relatives,” he says.

According to Mr Webster, the government has made it extremely difficult to sponsor parents for migration to Australia.

“Parents either have to pay over \$35,000 per parent, or face the prospect of waiting 15 years or more for their visa to be granted. The proposed changes to General Skilled Migration will be the final nail in the coffin for family migration,” he says.

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About Mark Webster

Mark Webster is the Founder and Director of Acacia Immigration Australia, NSW/ACT State President of the Migration Institute of Australia and Treasurer of the Migration Institute of Australia.