



Australian Government
**Department of Immigration
and Border Protection**

Visa simplification: transforming Australia's visa system

Consultation summary
December 2017



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Introduction

On 31 July 2017, the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection (the Minister) announced the Government would undertake a public consultation on transforming Australia's visa system to simplify it and better align it with Australia's long-term economic and social priorities.

Details of the consultation arrangements and a policy consultation paper were subsequently published at www.border.gov.au/Trav/visa-reform.

Public submissions could be made via the website from 31 July 2017 until 15 September 2017. Submissions have been published at www.border.gov.au/Trav/visa-reform/visa-simplification-submissions, where their author gave permission to do so.

During the consultation period, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (the Department) held two reform workshops at the Department's 2017 Industry Summit, and several roundtable meetings and teleconferences with industry stakeholders, government representatives and the diplomatic corps.

This document provides a summary of the feedback provided by the community, industry and other stakeholders during the consultation period. It does not represent the views of the Australian Government or the Department.

Executive summary

There is strong support for a visa system that is technologically innovative, simple to understand and easy to navigate, and also addresses the needs of migrants, industry and the community. The system needs to be future focused in its ability to support emerging and highly specialised industries while addressing short term needs. Many submissions requested an increase in incentives to live and work in regional Australia, support for the most vulnerable, and a focus on upholding international obligations.

A truly simplified visa system could have only one temporary visa that would allow the visa holder to visit, study and work or any combination of the three for a specified period of time. (Joint submission: Australian Council for Private Education and Training, Council of Private Higher Education, English Australia, Navitas)

A provisional period of a minimum of two years was most popular among those who supported the principle of provisional residence. Those who opposed provisional predominantly did so on the basis of personal circumstance; however, submissions overwhelmingly supported the retention of some kind of pathway from temporary to permanent residence. Industry also expressed strong support for a provisional period during roundtables, while also emphasising the need for a pathway from temporary to permanent residence.

The majority of submissions from peak industry and community organisations requested ongoing consultation throughout the development of the new system. Submissions also requested clear communication of the changes, both domestically and internationally, the inclusion of a transition period and a request that measures are not applied retrospectively.

Consultation overview

The Department has received 255 submissions (as at 3 October 2017), including 44 empty or invalid submissions, such as forms, curriculum vitae and promotional material.

The Department received 83 individual submissions, of which:

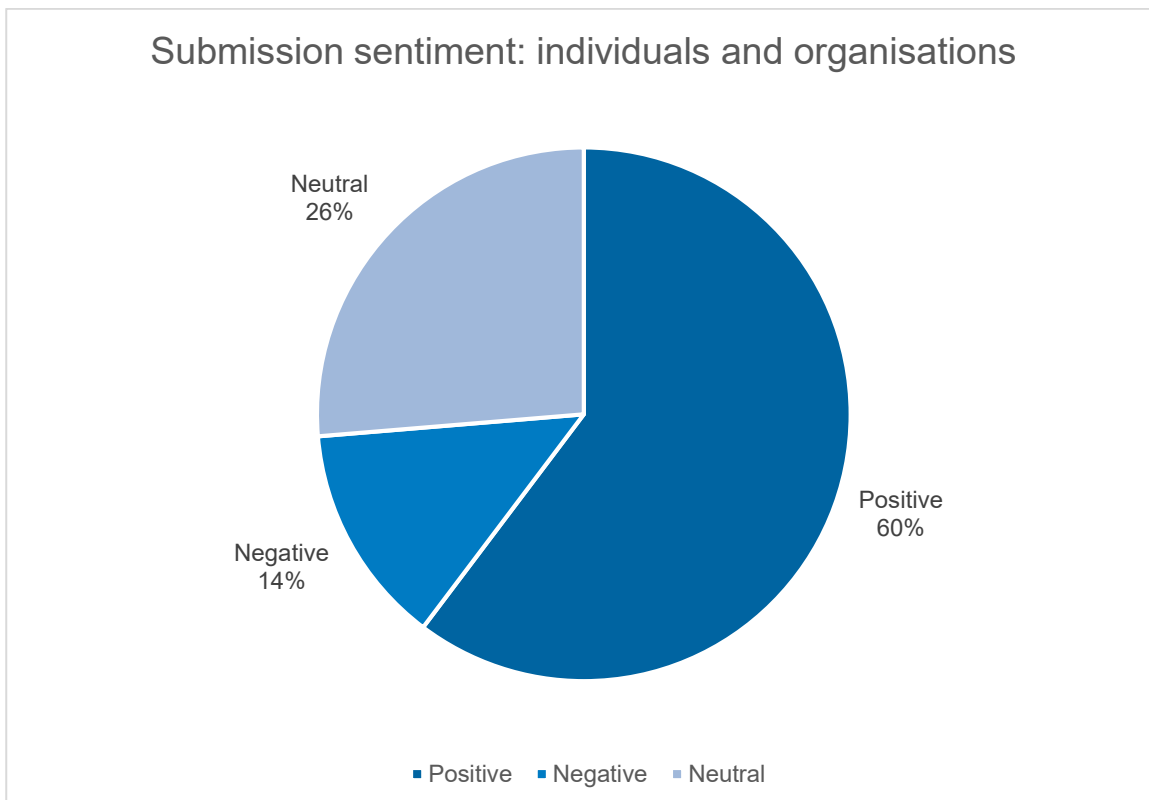
- 48 per cent (40 submissions) supported reform;
- 27 per cent (22 submission) did not express support or opposition, but provided advice on aspects of the reform or the migration program more broadly; and
- 25 per cent (21 submissions) opposed aspects of the reform or the broader migration program.

The Department received 128 submissions from organisations, including government bodies, industry, advocacy, community and interest groups, of which:

- 68 per cent (87 submissions) supported reform;
- 26 per cent (34 submissions) did not express support or opposition, but provided advice on aspects of the reform or the migration program more broadly; and
- Six per cent (seven submissions) solely expressed concern regarding visa simplification or the broader migration program.

Approximately **184 representatives of industry, academia, community and government** participated in roundtables in Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney, with an additional 60 industry representatives participating in immigration reform workshops at the 2017 Industry Summit. More than 70 members of the diplomatic corps also attended an exclusive briefing.

A full list of industry stakeholders engaged through the Industry Summit and the roundtables is at [Attachment A](#). A list of submission authors is at [Attachment B](#).



Summary of consultation outcomes

Simplifying our visa arrangements

The Department’s policy consultation paper asked three questions on this issue:

1. What would a system with approximately 10 visas look like?
2. What factors should we consider when simplifying the visa system?
3. What should be the key characteristics of a simplified and flexible visa system?

Submissions and roundtable participants that addressed this issue were **overwhelmingly supportive of visa simplification (88 per cent of submissions)**, although there was a view among industry stakeholders and academia that Australia’s migration system was, while overly complex, already one of the best in the world. A simplified system should be underpinned by a **clear vision of what future Australia should look like**. Any change should also be supported by a strong **evidence base**, guided by **ongoing consultation** with industry, academia, government, and the community, and supported by a domestic and international **education campaign**.

There was a strong view that visa ‘simplification’ must be genuine rather than creating ‘super visas’ with multiple streams, or shifting complexity to the conditions or policy associated with each of the visas. Conversely, there was some concern a system with approximately 10 visas would be oversimplified and not reflect the diverse needs of visitors, industry and the community. The design would need to provide both flexibility and certainty, particularly for those seeking settlement outcomes, and to be adaptable to a changing global environment. **Transparency around decision making, reduced processing times and a system that was easier to understand and navigate** were important to many contributors.

Multiple submissions provided lists of 8-12 visas as options for a simplified visa system, primarily divided into temporary, provisional or transitional, and permanent categories, intended to capture the purpose or intent of the majority of travellers.

Sample of recommended visa categories				
1. Education	Temporary	1. Visit	1. Visitor/ Traveller	1. Skilled qualification
2. Cultural exchange	1. Transit	2. Study (temporary)	2. Business	2. Unskilled temporary
3. Tourism	2. Tourist	3. Work	3. Independent skilled	3. Family member
4. Permanent migration (work rights)	3. Student	4. Live	4. Employer sponsored	4. Self- dependant
5. Provisional migration	4. Working holiday		5. Family reunion	5. Significant investor
6. Temporary migration (work rights)	5. Working, business		6. Investment	6. High achiever and long term
7. Humanitarian/ refugee	Permanent		7. Higher education	
	6. Investment		8. Work related temporary	
	7. Partner/family		9. Humanitarian	
	8. Humanitarian		10. Special requirements	
	9. Special purpose.			

Temporary and permanent residence

The Department's policy consultation paper asked three questions on this issue:

1. What distinctions should apply to temporary and permanent visas?
2. What requirements should underpin a migrant's eligibility for permanent residence?
3. Should a prospective migrant spend a period of time in Australia before becoming eligible for permanent residence? What factors should be considered?

Submissions that addressed this issue primarily focused on the potential for a period of residence before becoming eligible for permanent residence. Approximately **55 per cent opposed a provisional period**, predominantly on the assumption that it meant removing a permanent residency pathway for international students and skilled migrants or a substantial additional waiting period, or that it might affect Australia's global competitiveness.

These submissions were almost entirely based on the authors' personal circumstances and likely related to the fact that the policy consultation paper did not directly reference a pathway from temporary to permanent residency. Several submissions also raised concerns regarding the impact of a provisional period on the refugee and humanitarian cohort, and on broader integration outcomes. Many submissions did, however, support an assessment of values and integration as part of a provisional period.

Those in support of a provisional period suggested the temporary and permanent pathways provided a **valuable opportunity for visitors to demonstrate their intent to work and experience life in Australia, or to signal interest in committing to Australia respectively.**

There was a **consistent message** across all relevant submissions that there should be some **pathway between temporary and permanent**, and that 'time served' in the country, either as students or in skilled work, should count towards the provisional period. Time spent in regional areas during either the temporary or provisional periods should also be recognised.

Submissions recommended temporary **or provisional waiting periods of between 12 months to 10 years** before being eligible for permanent residence. **The most common provisional period supported by authors was two years.** Recommended eligibility requirements include:

- English language proficiency
- commitment to Australian values
- ability to integrate into the community
- financial investment
- skills
- university qualifications
- contribution to the economy
- being of good character.

Participants at the roundtable meetings were generally supportive of a **provisional period of residence** of a **minimum of two years**. They noted a provisional period could provide both flexibility and certainty for skilled migrants, and clearly delineate between those who sought to work and live in Australia in the short term or to commit to Australia for the long term.

This support was caveated by a desire to retain a pathway for short term visitors who decided to commit to Australia, and to take into account time already spent working or studying in Australia. The system would need to provide **flexibility, certainty and security**, particularly for vulnerable groups, including refugees and humanitarian entrants.

Modernising Australia's visa arrangements

The Department's policy consultation paper asked three questions on this issue:

1. What role does the visa system play in ensuring Australia remains attractive to the best and brightest temporary and permanent migrants?
2. Do you think an efficient visa system that is simple to understand and quickly assesses risk will make Australia a more attractive destination? Why?
3. To what extent should the Government collect biometrics from visa applicants?

All submissions that addressed this issue, with one exception, agreed the visa system played a **critical role in ensuring Australia** remains an attractive and competitive destination of choice. They described an efficient visa system as being **simple, fair, transparent, flexible, automated, easy to navigate and understand, and facilitating travel while preventing harm to the Australian community**. Industry sought a system that addressed genuine skills shortages, supported start-ups and emerging industries, and took a more forward-focused approach to skilled migration than existing mechanisms. Several industry submissions requested a streamlined sponsored migration program, similar to Australian Trusted Trader – a voluntary trade facilitation initiative.

Roundtable participants were also supportive of a system that addressed short-term labour needs through temporary visas, while providing a forward-focused skilled migration program and longer term visa that builds Australia's future economic capability. The system would need to maintain the existing focus on **combatting worker exploitation**, particularly for temporary visas.

All relevant submissions, with one exception supported the collection of **biometrics to underpin robust identity assurance**, in alignment with international commitments and domestic legislative responsibilities. Within industry, there was support for **data sharing** between government agencies and international partners to rapidly detect threats and streamline the assessment of genuine travellers.

Attachment A – List of stakeholder roundtables and meetings

NON-GOVERNMENT	GOVERNMENT / DIPLOMATIC
31 July 2017 – Industry Summit: immigration reform workshops – 60 attendees	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absolute Immigration - Australasian Veterinary Boards Council - Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry - Australian Industry Group - Australian Institute of Medical Scientists - Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council - Australian Pork - Accenture Australia - a. hartrodt Australia - Business Council of Australia - Cambridge Boxhill Language Assessment - Da Gama Pereira and Associates - Deloitte Australia - DXC Technology - English Australia - Erskine Rodan and Associates - ETS - EY - Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia - Fragomen Australia - Global Blue - IBM Australia - International Education Association of Australia - KPMG Australia - Law Council of Australia - Leidos Australia - Maritime Industry Australia - Migration Institute of Australia - NEAS - OT-Morpho - Pearson Australia - PwC - Rainsford and Associates - Restaurant and Catering Australia - Royal Caribbean International - Settlement Council of Australia - Tourism Accommodation Australia - VETASSESS Australia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Austrade - Business and Skilled Migration Queensland - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade - Department of Industry, Innovation and Science - Department of State Development, SA - Fair Work Ombudsman - High Commission of Canada - New Zealand Customs Service - Queensland Treasury - Queensland Department of Education and Training - Tasmanian Department of State Growth - Trade and Investment Queensland
2 August – Skilled Migration Officials Group meeting – 29 attendees	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Austrade - Department of Employment - Department of Education and Training - Department of Industry, Innovation and Science - Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development - ACT Treasury and Economic Development Directorate - NSW Department of Industry - Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, NT - Queensland Treasury

NON-GOVERNMENT	GOVERNMENT / DIPLOMATIC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trade and Investment Queensland - Department of State Development, SA - Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, Victoria - Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation, WA
18 August – Education Visa Consultative Committee – 21 attendees	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Council of International Students Australia - Council of Private Higher Education - English Australia - National Tertiary Education Union – Australian Council of Trade Unions - TAFE Directors Australia - Universities Australia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Austrade - Department of Education and Training - Independent Schools Council of Australia - NSW Department of Industry - SA Department of International and Higher Education - Queensland International Education & Training - Government Education and Training International Tasmania - Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, Victoria - NT Department of Education
25 August 2017 – Canberra roundtable – 10 attendees	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Australian Academy of Science - Australian National University - Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia - Independent Schools Council of Australia - Industry Innovation Advisor for National Security - Migration Institute of Australia - National Farmers Federation - Price Waterhouse Coopers - Universities Australia 	
29 August 2017 – Sydney roundtable – 24 attendees	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ajuria Lawyers - Amnesty International Australia - Australian Computer Society - Australian Cyber Security Growth Network - Australian International Marine Export Group - Council of Private Higher Education - EY - Fragomen Australia - Immigration Committee, Law Council of Australia - Immigration Solution Lawyers - Jesuit Refugee Service - Migration Institute of Australia - Medicines Australia - Ports Australia - Refugee Advice and Casework Service - University of New South Wales - University of Sydney - WiseTech Global - Youth Hostels Association 	

4 September 2017 – Canberra roundtable – 7 attendees	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes - Ausbiotech - BioMelbourne Network - Medical Technology Association of Australia - Medicines Australia - Research Australia 	
5 September 2017 – Canberra roundtable – 70+ Representatives	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Representatives of foreign missions
8 September 2017 – Melbourne roundtable – 22 attendees	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absolute Immigration - Administrative Law and Human Rights Executive Committee - Australian National University, Crawford School of Public Policy - Australian Health Workforce Institute, University of Melbourne - BioMelbourne Network - Box Hill Institute Group - Business Council of Australia - Cotton Group - CSL Australia - EY - Ford Motor Company of Australia Limited - Gordon Institute of TAFE - IBM Australia and New Zealand - International Education Association of Australia - Lena Hung and Associates - Oracle Corporation - Refugee Council of Australia - Refugee Law Reform Committee - Save the Children, Australia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, Victoria - Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victoria - Tourism Victoria
11 September 2017 – Sydney roundtable – 23 attendees	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bitton - Boeing Australia Holdings - Capgemini Australia - CIMIC Group - Cochlear Limited (Australia) - Elbit Systems of Australia - EY - Global Medics - GrainCorp Operations - Insurance Australia Group - John Holland Group - Learnosity - LendLease Corporation - Liberty OneSteel Trading - Prysmian Australia - Sydney Symphony Orchestra Holdings - Westpac Banking Corporation 	
13 September 2017 – Teleconference – 32 attendees	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Australian Council for Private Education and Training - Council for Private Higher Education - English Australia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ACT Government - Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, Victoria - Department of Education and Training

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Independent Schools Queensland - Navitas - Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology - Universities Australia - University of Western Australia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department of Education Services, WA - Department of International and Higher Education, SA - Department of State Development, SA - NT Department of Education - NSW Department of Industry - NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet - Queensland Government
14 September 2017 – Brisbane – 15 attendees	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brisbane Airport Corporation - Brisbane International Airport - Carnival Australia - Charlton Brown - Council of International Students Australia - DET International - Independent Schools Queensland - Institute for Future Environments - Oracle Corporation - Queensland University of Technology - TAFE International 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) - Department of Education Queensland - Department of Premier and Cabinet Queensland - Queensland Treasury - Tourism Queensland - Trade and Investment Queensland
15 September 2017 – Bilateral teleconference	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Qantas 	

Attachment B – List of submissions

Individual submissions

The below table is a record of submission provided to the Department on behalf of individual members of the community. It does not include those who did not provide permission to publish.

Permission to publish		
Ahmed Mohamed	Jasmine Bosdyk	Oliver Tan
Alan Harmsworth	Jason Price	Phil Prech
Anastasiia Shevchenko	Joey Yeo	Pramod Kurian
Anita Chandrasekaran	Johan W	Riccardo Armillei
Athey Dsouza	John Adams	Richard Greenwood
Augustine Pallupetta Raphael	John Cheong	Robert Smith
Benoy Devadatha	John Doe	Roger Shi
Bert Schultzer	Kai Zou	Sophia Wei
Chintan Doshi	Kristina Shead	Thavaneswaran Thambiayah
Dan Cob	Leo Talbert	Trevor Kerr
David Thompson	Mahanbir Grewal	Vishal Jaiswal
Dermot Sheridan	Mandy-Leigh Gallagher	Wai Chan
Dimitria Groutsis	Marco Moreno	Dr Wolfgang Babeck
Eric Liu	Maria Nina Maneja	Xuanhao Min
Felix Kam	Mary Grace	Yangguang Bian
Franz Kratschmer	Michael Bonfield	Yanrong Tao
George Peng	Mike Johnson	Yuxing Zhu
Hashim Mehmood	Muhammad Umer Farooq	Zainub Bahar
Icy Bao	Muyuruhai Zhang	

Organisation submissions

The below table is a record of submissions provided to the Department on behalf of organisations. It does not include those who did not provide permission to publish.

Permission to publish	
Organisation	Name of Point of Contact
Joint Submission -Access Community Services -Refugee and Immigration Legal Service (RAILS) -Multicultural Development Australia (MDA)	Chantal Gallant
AIGroup	Tony Melville
Anti-Slavery Australia	Jennifer Burn
Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes	Peter Thomas
Atlassian	Charlotte Doyle
Association of Australian Convention Bureaux	Andrew Hiebl
Ausfilm	Nick Herd
Australian Academy of Science	Chris Hatherly
Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Jenny Lambert
Joint submission -Australian Council for Private Education and Training -Council of Private Higher Education -English Australia -Navitas	Kadi Taylor
Australian Government Schools International	Elizabeth Webber

Australian Major Performing Arts Group (AMPAG)	Bethwyn Serow
Joint Submission -Australian International Marine Export Group -Superyacht Australia -Australian Commercial Marine Group	MaryAnne Edwards
Australian Maritime Officers Union	Not provided
Australian Meat Industry Council	Ken McKell
Australian Mines and Metals Association	Sarah Cerche
Australian National University	James Raymer Sudrishti Reich
Australian Pharmacy Council	Kamal Kant
Australian Research Council (ARC)	Justin Withers
Australian Strategic Policy Institute	John Coyne
Australian Technology Network of Universities	Jessica Yu
Australian Tourism Export Council	Anna Taylor
Australian Veterinary Association	Deborah Neutze
Australian Women Against Violence Alliance	Merrindahl Andrew
Joint Submission -AUSVEG -Victorian Farmers Federation -NSW Farmers Association -AUSVEG VIC, AUSVEG SA, -VegetablesWA -Growcom -Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association -NT Farmers Association	Jordan Brooke Barnett
BioMelbourne Network	Krystal Evans
Catapult People	Patrick Comerford
Charles Stuart University	Peter Fraser Andrew Vann
Comites	Bruno Mascitelli
Community and Public Sector Union	Elizabeth Hay
Consult Australia	Steve Kuper
Joint Submission -CPA Australia -Chartered Accountants Australia	Mary Clarke
CSL	Anna Schulze
Deloitte	Fiona Webb
Engineers Australia	Andre Kaspura
Estrin Saul Lawyers	Reuben Saul
ETS	Eileen Tyson
Faye Rouse International Business Services	Faye Rouse
Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia	Alia Imtoul
Fragomen	Cherie Wright
French-Australian Chamber of Commerce	Claire Kasses
German-Australian Chamber of Industry and Commerce	Ron Koehler
Google	Google Australia
Group of Eight Australia	Vicki Thomson
Immigration Advice and Rights Centre Inc.	Ali Mojtahedi
Immigration Solutions Lawyers	Anne O'Donoghue
Independent Schools Council of Australia	Caroline Miller
Interactive Games and Entertainment Association	Ron Curry
International Education Association of Australia	Phil Honeywood
ISA	Bill Ferris
ISANA	Mary Ann Seow
James Cook University	Melissa Banks

Jesuit Refugee Service Australia	Carolina Gottardo
Jesuit Social Services	Julie Edwards
La Trobe University	Cathy Besliev
Law Council of Australia	Arion Morena
Legal Aid NSW	Robyn Gilbert
Joint submission -Lena Hung Associates -Hammond Taylor	Jackson Taylor
Live Performance Australia	Evelyn Richardson
Marine Industry Australia Limited	Isabelle Guaran
Medicines Australia	Elizabeth De Somer
Meeting and Events Australia	Robyn Johnson
Melbourne Airport Australia Pacific Airports Corporation Limited	Jai McDermott
Migration Council Australia	Alexander Willox
Migration Solutions	Mark Glazbrook
MigrationNT – Department of Trade, Business and Innovation	Mary Martin
Multicultural Labor	Not Provided
Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia	Nadine Liddy
National Farmers Federation	Ben Rogers
National Retail Association	Dominique Lamb
New Zealand Foreign Affairs and Trade	Llewlynn Roberts
Ports Australia	Ashween Sinha
Queensland Tourism Industry Council	Natasha Montesalvo
Randstand Pty Ltd	Felicity Empson
Refugee Advice and Casework Service	Scott Cosgriff
Refugee Council of Australia	Sahar Okhovat
Research Australia	Greg Mullins
Restaurant and Catering	James Coward
Save the Children	Not Provided
Settlement Council of Australia	Nick Tebbey
Study Cairns	Carol Doyle
Swinburne University of Technology	Monica Kennedy
Sydney Airport	Robin Schuck
Symphony Services Australia	Kate Lidbetter
Tech Sydney StartupAUS	Joanna Ross
The Communications Council and Media Federation of Australia	Tony Hale
The Freedom Partnership, End Modern Slavery, Salvation Army	Heather Moore
The Humanitarian Group	Helen Pearce
Tourism Accommodation Australia	Anthony Brierley
Tourism and Transport Forum Australia	Lucinda Millsom
United Voice	Frances Flanagan
Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania	Mark Zirnsak
Universities Australia	Angela Lehmann
University of Melbourne	Carlene Wilson
University of New England	Arvind Iyengar
University of Sydney	Anna Boucher Michael Spence David Latimer
Joint Submission -University of Technology Sydney -University of Sydney -Western Sydney University	Dimitria Groutsis
University of Western Australia	Dawn Freshwater Donella Caspersz Loretta Baldassar

University of Wollongong	Julia Payne
Victorian Multicultural Commission	Not provided
West Australian Government	Christina Ratnasinghe
West Justice	Tarni Perkal
Youth Hostel Association	Silke Kerwick