



THE GREEK ORTHODOX COMMUNITY OF MELBOURNE AND VICTORIA
ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΗ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΗΤΑ ΜΕΛΒΟΥΡΝΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΒΙΚΤΩΡΙΑΣ

8 December 2022

The Hon Clare O'Neil
Minister for Home Affairs

Re: Submission for Migration Review – What is Stopping Our Migration System from Working Well and What Reforms are Needed

Dear Minister,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above matter.

Below is an outline of some of the key issues facing Australia's migration system as noted from the perspective of the Greek Australian Community, together with suggested reforms. It is our hope that these reforms will enable the system to function in a more cohesive, just and efficient manner that more appropriately addresses the needs of Greek-Australians as well as the needs of Australia more broadly.

Background

The Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria (GOCMV) is the largest member-based Greek organisation in the Southern Hemisphere. We have over 35,000 subscribers and are based in locations across Melbourne and headquartered in Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.

Since our inception in 1897, we have served as the peak organisation in representing the interests of the Greek community in Victoria. Throughout our long history, our organisation has played a pioneering role in advocating the rights of migrants and refugees, as well as a foundational role in the development of multiculturalism.

During both the pre and post-war migration periods, the GOCMV was the focal point for newly-arrived migrants from Greece. We have closely collaborated with government departments in relation to migration matters for over 100 years. Examples of this include informing the Australian public in the early 1900s of the benefits of migration, creating hubs that sought employment and housing for newly arrived Greek immigrants and sending delegations to Bonegilla migrant camp. The GOCMV has extensive knowledge and experience in relation to migration and continues to have an active voice in these matters.

In recent times, we have continued to play an important role in assisting newly arrived Greek migrants to Australia. This was demonstrated following the Greek economic crisis in 2009, when our organisation assisted thousands of Greek citizens, who were mainly skilled and educated individuals, to successfully settle into life in Australia.

In terms of the current migration system, the areas we have identified where change would be most beneficial to our community include the following:

- 1) 462 visas
- 2) Aged care needs
- 3) Skills Expos in Greece
- 4) Other matters

The above 4 points are addressed as follows:

1) Work and holiday visa – subclass 462 - introduce more flexible requirements for Greek nationals

Since July 2019, Australia and Greece have participated in reciprocal work and holiday visa arrangements. Under current arrangements, the Australia-Greece Work and Holiday program offers 500 places per program year to individuals aged 30 years and under, as holders of subclass 462 Work and Holiday Visas.

Cap increase – subclass 462 work and Holiday Visa

It is submitted that this cap ought to be increased for Greek nationals, as it has been for other nationals. For example, from 1 July 2022 an additional 1,400 places were made available each year through reciprocal increases to visa caps for Hungary, Austria and the Slovak Republic. Given the large Greek community in Australia and the support systems that are in place to assist newly arrived Greek nationals, the cap for Greek persons ought to be increased to at least 1,000. Such an increase will provide ongoing opportunities for Greek citizens to travel and work in Australia and vice-versa and will strengthen the relations between our nations.

Age limit Increase - subclass 462 work and Holiday Visa

From 1 July 2022, the age limit for Italian and Danish citizens wanting to work and travel in Australia will increase by five years from 30 to 35 years of age.

Australia has previously negotiated arrangements on a reciprocal basis with Canada, France and Ireland to expand the eligible age range for WHM applicants to 35 years.

It is submitted that the age cap ought to be increased from 30 to 35 years for Greek nationals seeking to come to Australia as holders of working holiday visas.

2) Aged Care

At this moment, there is a dire need for additional services to cater to the needs of our ageing communities in Australia. The ageing Greek community is no exception. It is necessary to cater to the special cultural and language needs of elderly Australians who were born overseas and face unique challenges as they age.

In order to address skills shortages in the aged care sector, it is submitted that the government ought to introduce a visa pathway that will allow skilled and qualified people to work more easily in Australia in the field of aged care.

In addition to this, incentives should be provided to overseas students to study relevant educational courses in aged care in Australia so that they can then utilize these skills in employment roles as carers and eventually apply for Australian permanent residence.

From the perspective of our community, increasing the numbers of Greek speaking aged care workers in Australia at the present time would be of enormous benefit to the thousands of elderly Greek Australians who have, over many decades, worked hard to contribute to Australia's prosperity. Providing culturally and linguistically appropriate care to our community is an urgent priority to us right now.

3) Australia Needs Skills Expos in Athens, Greece

Given the large Greek Australian population, the Australian government would benefit from promoting aged care job opportunities, visas and educational courses in "Australia Needs Skills" expos to be run in Greece in the future, similar to the one previously held in Athens and Thessaloniki in 2011 and to other similar expos which are presented in other nations by the Australian government.

In addition to aged care, such expos can provide information about studying in Australia and focus on attracting talent in other areas facing skills shortages such as health and technology.

4) Other matters

The feedback we receive from Greek nationals who are in contact with our organisation is that the Australian migration process is difficult to navigate, extremely costly, time-consuming and overly bureaucratic. Concerns have also been raised regarding the age limit for persons


applying for permanent skilled visas which was reduced from 55 years to 45 years several years ago.

These factors act as deterrents to people considering migration to Australia. It is submitted that the system would benefit from being made simpler, more efficient and more cost effective. We support a broader, more inclusive migration system and an increase of Australia's current annual intake of 195,000.

Should you seek any further comment from us please contact Jorge Menidis on 03 9662 2722 or via email jorge@greekcentre.com.au.

We look forward to further discussions with you regarding the above.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill Papastergiadis', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Bill Papastergiadis OAM
President