

Partnership would help eradicate migration rackets

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Adelaide migration expert Mark Glazbrook is calling for the introduction of a new industry-partnership model with the Department of Immigration as part of an effort to reduce the level of program rorting that currently exists within the industry.

The recommendation follows a string of recent media reports surrounding various program rorting allegations, which has seen the federal government launch an inquiry.

The partnership would be similar to the model recently proposed in New Zealand, with responsibility for visa application processing shared between government and approved industry representatives.

According to that proposal, migration agents that meet the necessary criteria set by the INZ would be granted a higher level of accreditation than their peers, and extended streamlined processing rights that make it more attractive for applicants to engage their services.

Sydney-based migration lawyer Nigel Dobbie suggests it would cost the Australian government \$500 million to restore the Department of Immigration's operational effectiveness.

However, Mr Glazbrook said a more effective first step would be to work from the top down, by restricting the ability for unregistered agents to fool applicants into entrusting them with their applications.

"The prevalence of these migration rackets in Australia is what makes this issue so difficult to solve," he said.

"The industry is awash with unregistered and unqualified people posing as legitimate migration agents, and who are more than willing to provide false and misleading information to the Department in return for payment from applicants.

"For applicants that speak English as a second-language, it is especially difficult for them to know a legitimate migration agent from a fraudulent one.

"They are also less likely to report being exploited for fear of getting in further trouble for having done an under-the-table deal."

A clearer measure of accreditation and priority processing rights for approved agents would encourage applicants to seek migration assistance from legitimate sources, and limit the number of fraudulent applications being presented to the Department.

"An industry-partnership model like the one currently being considered in New Zealand would result in improved information flow between Industry and government, something that is sorely needed in Australia right now," Mr Glazbrook said.

"It would also reduce Department processing times by outsourcing assessment tasks for application types which are typically lower risk and received in higher volumes by the Department."