

Visa reform adds cost burden to migrants' employers

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Changes to Australia's immigration laws to take effect on 1 July will affect 457 visas and Immigration costs and charges in ways that will influence business, according to South Australian migration expert, Mark Glazbrook.

The Migration Solutions MD says proposed changes to the 457 program in the Migration Amendment (Temporary Sponsored Visas) Bill 2013 will see employers required to pay the immigration costs associated with the 457 visa.

"Currently, employers can ask applicants to pay this," Mark points out. "The employer can go to the expense of finding and employing staff and getting a visa approved, only to find the new employee may get cold feet and decide not to come to Australia and commence work.

"Or, an employee gets a 457 visa and the employer pays the cost, then upon arrival, the employee is then free to find work with another employer. In this situation, the employer is faced with very significant costs.

"These changes will make the process very cost prohibitive for many SME businesses who continue to face skill shortages and cannot meet demands locally."

The reform also increases visa application charges for skilled migration programs and for the first time family members will be charged separately.

"For example, the current cost for a family of four (mum, dad and 2 children under 18) to apply for permanent residency in Australia through a permanent employer sponsored program is \$3060 - even higher for partner and spouse visas. After 1 July the same family of four will cost \$6120 - \$3060 for the main applicant, \$1530 for the secondary applicant and \$765 per dependent child.

"In recent times the high Aussie dollar high VAC for student visas has been seen as a reason why students are no longer coming to Australia in the same numbers as before.

"The VAC for Higher Education Sector (Subclass 573) student visa program (University degrees) will now cost \$535 for the main applicant and \$405 for a spouse and \$135 per child.

"Currently the VAC for a 457 visa, family of four costs \$455. From 1 July the same family of four will cost \$2250 being \$900 for the main applicant, \$900 for a secondary applicant, plus \$225 per dependent child. These changes will have a dramatic effect on businesses and visa applicants alike."

Meanwhile, the State Government has allocated \$600,000 in funding over two years in a bid to boost skilled and business migrant numbers to South Australia.

SA Manufacturing, Innovation and Trade Minister, Tom Kenyon says the extra funding will help Immigration SA execute important marketing strategies to target potential skilled and business migrants in the UK and Asia.

"We'll broaden our promotion of the state to remind potential migrants of the many benefits in moving to South Australia," the Minister says. "We're seeking to build and maintain relationships with migration agents, particularly in China. Immigration SA will also use the funding allocation to boost the number of overseas missions in targeted locations, such as China.

The Minister says the State Government is also reviewing its state migration criteria and requirements.

"The Department for Manufacturing, Innovation, Trade, Resources and Energy and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet is working with local industry on a 90-day project reviewing current state migration criteria with the aim of increasing eligibility for potential migrants," he says.