



RCCIWA (Inc)
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1st September 2023

The Honourable Andrew Giles MP
Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs
andrew.giles.mp@aph.gov.au

Dear Minister Giles,

Re: Regional Businesses Concern over the Federally Imposed Reduction in Visa Nomination Caps for the State Nominated Migration Program.

On behalf of the members of the Regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry of WA (RCCIWA), I am writing to share the extremely strong concerns our members have of the recent decision by the Department of Home Affairs and the Federal Government to reduce the Visa Nomination Caps for Western Australia's Nominated Migration Program from 8140 in the year ending June 30th 2023, to 2350 in this current Financial Year. This is a large and unexpected reduction that does not make sense to businesses and will negatively impact their ability to maintain and grow. Western Australia is in desperate need of skilled migrants.

RCCIWA is a member based organisation that represents 45 WA Regional Chambers of Commerce and business network bodies, who in turn represent approximately 10,000 regional businesses. One of the key roles of RCCIWA is to ensure the voice of WA Regional Business is heard and to work closely through a collaborative approach with all decision makers on conveying any concerns or issues in a constructive manner. This is something we pride ourselves on and has proved very effective for both our members and for all three tiers of Government.

RCCIWA appreciates that the caps were raised significantly due to the impacts of COVID 19 and the nationwide skills shortage that resulted, however the nationwide approach to reducing them to a quarter of what they were last year is not taking into account the significant pressures on businesses in Regional WA. As you would be aware Western Australia is experiencing incredible economic growth and activity that is showing no signs of easing, with a long pipeline of economic generating activity ahead. Ensuring we have enough skilled people to be able to meet the demands of industry and Government is critical to our State. The decision your government has taken to reduce the Visa Nomination Caps so dramatically does not seem to acknowledge or consider the following;

- In recent surveys that RCCIWA conducted, 63% of regional businesses stated that being unable to source and attract skilled workers was the number one impediment to their business either remaining viable or growing
- Western Australia is focused on diversification and supporting sustainable business growth – this cannot happen without skilled migrants
- All three tiers of Government and private industry and businesses are working in collaboration to address the issues of liveability, housing, and social infrastructure to ensure regional communities have the strongest opportunity to attract new workers, particularly migrants.
- There is a strong focus throughout Regional WA on providing wrap-around support and services for skilled migrants.
- Regional businesses are desperate for more skilled employees – and without them, many will either chose to not expand or at worst case, close their business.

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The Voice of Regional Business in Western Australia



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Minister, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and discuss this further as we know there is a strong case to restore the Visa Nomination Caps for Western Australia to the numbers we had last year. Regional businesses are being stifled by the inability to find skilled workers and our fear is that this decision will just see the problem exacerbated and we will continue in a cycle of our economic growth being constricted and not able to deliver the economic prosperity that it should for the whole of Australia. We strongly urge you to reconsider this decision.

We are all working incredibly hard to ensure Western Australia is a destination of choice, and having a restricted ability to attract skilled migrants goes against all of these endeavours.

I look forward to your reply and to working in collaboration with you and your office on this incredibly important issue. My best contact is ceo@regionalchamberswa.com.au . I write this on behalf of all of the RCCIWA members, as well as the broader regional WA business communities.

Your Sincerely

Kitty Prodonovich

CEO

cc Hon Clare O'Neil MP, Hon Roger Cook MLA, Hon Simone McGurk MLA