



**New category needed for migrants
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A new category of “entrepreneur”, should be created for migrants to attract people with business skills who cannot afford to immediately invest in Australia, says Member for Mrs Flinders Liz Penfold in her submission to the Overseas Qualifications Reference Group’s draft report.

The group was established by the State Government to identify barriers to bringing suitable migrants to SA and find solutions. Mrs Penfold has been working for the past three years to help bring skilled migrants from Zimbabwe to fill positions on Eyre Peninsula.

Under present immigration requirements, entrepreneurs who want to live in South Australia must come in on a business visa and invest at least \$350,000 in a business here. If they want to enter as an employee, only their formal qualifications are recognised. The application process does not take into account the experience they may have gained in running their own businesses.

“This cuts out a lot of people who have skills in running small businesses but don’t have that sort of money to invest, or they may only have minor formal qualifications but a wealth of business experience. Those coming from Zimbabwe often have to leave their homes with only a suit case ” Mrs Penfold said.

“We need to create a new category for entrepreneurs which recognises people with business experience and enables them to work in management positions, with the possibility of eventually owning a business here.

“For example, I read the CV of a person with a certificate as an airport baggage handler who was looking for a job as a baggage handler. Much to my amazement he had run his own marina for the previous 10 years. He should have been able to apply for entry to SA as an experienced marina manager and be placed in one of the many marinas being developed around our coast line.

I then looked at the CVs of a number of other skilled workers who are now living in SA only to find that all of them had run their own businesses in Zimbabwe but were forced to leave the country with next to nothing. They had all reverted back to qualifications and certificates that they had gained when they were much younger and less experienced people, so they could gain entry to SA.

“We are missing out on people who fall between the cracks – they have experience in running businesses, but cannot afford to invest the required amount immediately on arriving in this country.

“I have been approached by a small business owner who wants someone to lease his business with an option to purchase it because he has not been able to sell it. He doesn’t want to have the hassles of paying to have an employee manage it.

“He wants to travel around Australia and leave the business behind him. What an opportunity for someone from Zimbabwe who has had their own business to get a new start in a peaceful new country – and for the current owner to eventually sell it and enjoy his retirement.

“But under our present screening method, such a potential migrant is merely regarded as a skilled worker, because we only acknowledge his or her formal qualifications and not the fact that this person has been running

their own successful business for many years.

“If a business can be leased with an option to purchase instead of being closed by people who cannot find buyers in small country communities these communities will benefit greatly,” Ms Penfold said.

“Small towns that lose vital services and the families who run them feel the flow-on effects in their local economies and health and education services. People from the town are forced to travel to other towns and will spend their money there continuing a downward spiral that is hard to reverse.

A category for ‘entrepreneurs’ I believe would solve the problems.”