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I was most interested to read the Reference Group's draft final report on overseas skills and qualifications assessment and recognition in South Australia which mirrored much of my own experience gained from working to bring migrants to Eyre Peninsula.

I have found that because Eyre Peninsula is so remote people from many countries find it just too quiet, preferring instead the hustle and bustle of cities. For this reason and ones of compassion I have begun to target Zimbabweans who are used to isolation and fit well into small country towns where I badly need to increase the populations. If we do not succeed in filling the available jobs in these small communities we will lose education, health and other support services and it is a downward spiral that is hard to reverse.

For skilled workers in the health sector, language problems seem to be a major barrier while in education the need for four-year degrees prevents highly skilled and qualified teachers from taking up positions. Both these problems are obviously ones you are well aware of.

I want to call to your attention the difficulty in bringing entrepreneurs to our country. I believe we are missing out on some wonderful people by not recognising their skills and experience in this area. This problem first came to my attention when 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.

I then had a look at the diesel mechanics that we had employed on Eyre Peninsula only to find that all three 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 in order to obtain entry to South Australia. This is because the current rules do not recognise business experience, unless people are applying under the business migrant category, but to do that they have to be able to invest a large amount of money in a business in Australia. So 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. We need to create a new category for entrepreneurs that recognises people with business experience and enables them to work in management positions, with the possibility that they will eventually own a business here.

Recognition of prior learning *and* experience is a common assessment of a person's ability in this country, both in the jobs market and further education sectors. This is what we need to implement if we are to help these potential migrants to come into our country so they can be considered for the jobs that they are well qualified to fill. The baggage handler should have come in as an experienced marina manager and be placed in one of the many marinas that are being developed around our coast line.

These people are already traumatised and to force them to go into low paid, low skill jobs that they had moved on from years before only sets them back and causes even more trauma. If

they are placed where they can use the full extent of their knowledge and experience they will be much more settled in their new lives and bring much greater benefits to our communities.

Already I have been approached by a small business owner who wants someone to lease his mechanical repair business with an option to purchase it. He doesn't want to have to pay the \$32,000 to have an employee. He wants to get in a caravan and travel around Australia and leave the business behind him. What an opportunity for someone from Zimbabwe who has had their own mechanical repair business to get a new start in a peaceful new country – and for the current owner to sell it and enjoy his retirement. But under our present screening method, such a potential migrant is merely regarded as a mechanic, because we only acknowledge his formal qualifications and not the fact that he has been running his own successful business for many years.

Regional communities in SA would also benefit from such a common sense change to our screening method. If the mechanical business mentioned above cannot be sold, the business will close, the small town loses a vital service and another family with all the flow-on implications for the local economy, health and education. People from the town will be forced to travel to another town to get their vehicles serviced, and while they are there, will spend money in the neighbouring town rather than their own.

I ask that you consider a recommendation regarding the recognition of prior learning and experience so that entrepreneurs who do not have the funds to come in as business migrants can be considered as very worthwhile immigrants who can be encouraged to come to our wonderful country and bring their ability to help employ and train our own people, particularly in country areas where the need is so great.