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457 visa laws

Former Immigration and Citizenship Minister Brendan O'Connor said new measures to tighten up the 457 system for temporary skilled workers would safeguard Australian jobs and ensure overseas workers were not exploited.

"There has been significant growth of the 457 system with more than 21 000 or 20 per cent more visa holders in Australia than this time last year. At the same time there are even more sponsor employers who are doing the wrong thing." He said the increasing number of 457s in low skill industries was of particular concern.

"Growth has been highest in the occupation sectors of retail and hospitality which have traditionally provided jobs for young Australian workers. A new Local Jobs Check would require all employers to prove that they have advertised for labour locally before sponsoring workers from overseas."

The new laws will also require employers to invest between one and two per cent of their total payroll each year into training local staff and those on 457s for the duration of sponsorship.

The Minister said "Enshrining the obligations of sponsor employers in legislation, and empowering an additional 300 inspectors of the Fair Work Ombudsman to investigate breaches, will act as a further deterrent to those abusing the system."

The amending 457 legislation:

- enshrines the obligations of sponsor employers in legislation, and significantly strengthens the ability of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship to prosecute employers who do the wrong thing
- empowers the inspectors of the Fair Work Ombudsman to investigate breaches of sponsorship obligations to the Department for further action, significantly increasing the deterrent to those who seek to abuse the system
- extends the period that a 457 worker can remain in Australia after ceasing employment with a sponsor from 28 days to 90 days and
- introduces enforceable undertakings for employers who have breached their obligations, further strengthening the compliance capacity of the Department.

"This legislation presents a comprehensive package of reforms which will balance the interests of Australian workers with the need to strengthen protection for overseas workers," he said.

<http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/bo/2013/bo204111.htm>

Offshore Resources Projects Bill

A federal Bill to stop offshore resources projects employing cheap overseas labour has passed the House of Representatives. The legislation extends Australia's migration zone to cover offshore pipelines and rigs. Foreign staff would no longer be able to work on the projects unless they have been granted a visa by the Australian Government. It is not possible to properly regulate the offshore resources industry without the changes.

"Without this Bill the Government cannot tell if foreign workers in the offshore resources industry are being underpaid or exploited ... or tell how many foreign workers are working on Australia's offshore resources," he said. The Government will consult with industry about a suitable visa process.

"The new visa pathway will give industry the flexibility it needs while ensuring the Australian Government can regulate these Australian jobs and ensure Australian conditions are maintained. There will be transitional arrangements when the new requirements come into force next year."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-06-17/bill-to-stop-cheap-overseas-labour-passes-lower-house/4761098>

Government shores up more Aussie jobs

The Government has taken another step to protect Australian jobs by moving to extend the application of the migration zone to Australia's offshore resources industry.

Former Immigration and Citizenship Minister Brendan O'Connor said proposed amendments to the Migration Act would enable all Australian industry and employers to be regulated under Australian law, including those located in the Exclusive Economic Zone and the Continental Shelf.

The changes follow the recommendation of the Migration Maritime Taskforce, established after the Allseas court case in May 2012. The court found the existing migration zone did not extend to a vessel engaged in laying pipeline on the seabed, meaning no work visa was required for overseas workers on board such vessels.

"This legislation makes sense – the resources in question are governed by Australian laws and the jobs should be too."

<http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/bo/2013/bo203759.htm>

Visa rorts

Hundreds of foreign workers and students are being forced into debt bondage after paying up to \$40,000 for a skilled worker visa, with some signing contracts stating they'll be sacked if they engage in "trade union activities".

A Fairfax Media investigation can reveal the most extensive rorting of the 457 and 187 visa schemes ever to be exposed, with up to 200 cases across Australia including:

29 Filipino workers who have complained to their embassy after some had to direct part of their salary to repay loans organised by recruitment and migration agents that have interest rates of up to 50 per cent.

Foreign workers promised long-term work or permanent residency if they paid between \$5000 and \$40,000 to middlemen across the nation only to be given temporary work or, in a small number of cases, little or no pay.

80 Indian workers duped into paying \$4000 for a cleaning course in Melbourne worth only \$1300 after being misled that it would enable them to get a work visa.

Some of those Indian workers were directed by their recruitment agent to work as unskilled labourers in abattoirs in an arrangement one of the abattoir owners, JBS Australia, said involved the agent misleading it and the workers.

The rorting of the visas schemes and exploitation of foreign workers has been labelled "a national shame" by ACTU secretary Dave Oliver and involved numerous companies operating across Australia and often under the noses of authorities.

"There needs to be further investigation to see what is happening with this system where workers are becoming bonded labour," Mr Oliver said. "This is a racket involving migration agents, middlemen, exploitation of workers and loan sharks."

The Immigration Minister told Fairfax Media the Government would introduce sweeping reforms, enabling 300 Fair Work inspectors to investigate visa rorts.

"The Government has had serious concerns about rorts of the 457 system for some time and the Department's limited powers to monitor and enforce compliance of the scheme," he said.

<http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/political-news/visa-rorts-leave-foreign-workers-in-debt-bondage-20130605-2nqnm.html>

Workers accuse Indian IT giant Tata Consultancy Services of visa abuse

One of India's largest IT companies has been accused of misusing 457 visas to bring foreign workers into Australia.

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has IT contracts with some of the nation's largest companies, including Qantas, Woolworths, Telstra and AGL. Current and former employees of TCS say the company relies on foreign workers, even in areas where there are no skills shortages. One worker says TCS overuses 457 visas.

"I was never asked to advertise for any Australians when developers were required. We just contacted the local area manager and he would send a developer on the next plane from Mumbai," she said.

TCS employs almost 300,000 people worldwide and makes billions of dollars each year. The revelations come as the Federal Government moves to toughen laws against the use of foreign workers.

Former Immigration Minister Brendan O'Connor wants to force companies to advertise locally before employing foreign workers. "I don't think I can be any clearer as Minister that we don't want the scheme to be used in a way that undermines employment conditions or seeks to unfairly displace local workers."

Another former employee of TCS, Hasan Mahboob, agrees that the industry is guilty of using too many 457 visas to fill jobs in which there is no skills shortage in Australia. "Project managers, program managers, account managers or relationship managers - I do not see those roles should be imported under 457 visa conditions."

Most of TCS staff at Qantas on 457 visas

TCS holds a multi-million-dollar IT contract with Qantas.

Mr Mahboob says the whole industry over-uses 457 visas. And he agrees that TCS relies on the foreign worker scheme.

"I have certainly seen heavy use of 457 visa, starting from the very top - management level people, relationship managers, account managers, service delivery managers, project managers, program managers, business analysts, all of which I question should be done by 457 visa."

Peter Tighe, the national secretary of the Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union (CEPU), says the IT sector needs attention.

"We know there are people in the industry looking for employment. You wonder why there's a growth in 457 visa holders coming into the country to work in that area when you've got people who are unemployed. It just doesn't add up"

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-06-20/workers-accuse-indian-it-giant-of-457-visa-abuse/4769482>

Visa joy turns to misery with pay shortfalls

Andres Bernal, who came to Australia on a 457 visa as a diving instructor, has bitter personal experience of the downside of the temporary skilled worker scheme.

Mr Bernal, 36, has had to accept defeat in a battle to regain lost wages against a former employer. He alleges Sydney Underworld Pty Ltd owes him \$16,000 in unpaid wages and entitlements after he spent a year working for its associated company, Dive Trek Pty Ltd in La Perouse. He said the owner repeatedly paid him hundreds of dollars less than his agreed weekly pay of \$850.

When he complained to the Immigration Department, the former Chilean navy marine, a university-educated film producer, was told he would be deported within two weeks if he left the company, as it was a visa condition he be employed by Sydney Underworld. He said "It took Fair Work Australia six months to give me an answer and ... the issue was, the [owner] bankrupted the company [Sydney Underworld] and I couldn't get any money."

The Fair Work Ombudsman recovered more than \$1 million in unpaid wages and entitlements for foreign workers between last July and March. It had 164 complaints from 457 visa holders, with those workers being repaid \$285,915.

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/political-news/visa-joy-turns-to-misery-with-pay-shortfalls-20130623-2oqpv.html>

Ombudsman investigates foreign worker exploitation

The Fair Work Ombudsman is investigating claims temporary foreign workers on an inappropriate visa have been paid as little as \$3/hour.

While the mining boom is generating billions of dollars of revenue, its demand for labour across a range of sectors is creating a severe skills shortage. But with thousands of extra workers needed, temporary foreign workers are falling through the cracks of Australia's immigration and labour laws. And unions suspect there are many more unreported cases, specifically abuses of the short-term 456 business visitor visa.

Out of work and in limbo, Dos Cordilla, Zenry Peteros and Roel Flores are waiting in the Philippines for a Fair Work Ombudsman's ruling on 18 months of work on Australia's north-west oil rigs.

Zenry Peteros said "It's a long-time job, it's a long, hard job, 12 hours, starting to come 6 am in the morning until six in the evening same, same job".

They worked 12 hours a day, seven days a week as marine painters and general hands around a rig operated by the world's largest shipping company, Danish international Maersk, for Woodside Petroleum's \$14 billion Pluto gas project.

Next to fully paid Australian workers, they were earning a fifth of the minimum wage - less than \$3 an hour.

The men were discovered in February by accident. They were sent to another Maersk vessel, *Discoverer*, because of worker overcrowding. On the new rig, Australian workers questioned the men about their pay and the Immigration Department and Fair Work Ombudsman were informed.

Australian Workers Union said "To say they're being ripped off is being a bit generous, really. It was almost slave wages in terms of the Australian oil and gas industry. And the saddest thing about it is there's not like there's not a capacity to pay in the oil and gas industry at the moment".

The painters had come to Australia on short stay 456 visas which had been arranged for them through the Australian embassy in the Philippines by a labour hire company called Supply Oilfield Services Incorporated, or SOS, based in this Manila building.

A 456 visa is not a work visa; it's a temporary business visitor visa where there is no obligation on the part of employers to pay the same rate as Australians doing the same job. It is intended for genuine business people who intend to come to Australia for a very short visit to undertake business meetings and such like.

Unions say many of the workers coming in on 456 visas, longer term 457 visas or on working holiday programs are unaware of their rights and responsibilities.

The Immigration Department says it can't comment on cases under official investigation, but it says all allegations of worker exploitation will be given close attention and investigated. The Department also says the Government is currently reviewing the sanctions regime for employers who employ illegal workers with a view to strengthening the penalties.

<http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2011/s3201892.htm>

Changing face of migration to Australia

The Asia region is becoming a leading source for permanent migration to Australia according to Australia's Migration Trends, a new report released by the former Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Brendan O'Connor. It contains comprehensive analysis and commentary on migration activity for 2011-12, and provides a clear picture of substantial changes in the origins of Australia's migrants, reflecting the trend towards an Asian Century. For the first time, India and China were the two main source countries of permanent migrants.

"Seven of the top 10 source countries in 2011-12 were located in the Asia region," Mr O'Connor said. "Between 1996 and 2011, Australia's overseas-born population grew by more than 40 per cent to reach six million. This was more than double the rate for the Australian-born population and is essential in addressing the demographic challenges of an ageing population. With the government's strong emphasis on skilled migration, this sort of growth is also crucial to ensuring depth in Australia's labour force" and he said patterns of migration are also changing.

"In 2011-12, half of Australia's skilled migrants applied while they were already living in Australia on a temporary visa. This was more than twice the rate of a decade earlier and reflects a growing trend of migrants seeing what Australia has to offer before making a commitment to settle permanently."

<http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/bo/2013/bo203939.htm>

Jump in skilled workers

Data released recently show the number of overseas workers coming to Australia on 457 visas has jumped more than 20 per cent over the past year.

The Minister for Immigration and Citizenship said the significant growth in the program highlighted the need for further reform.

“Genuine skill shortages do exist in industries and locations right across Australia and we are attempting to ensure they get filled, while at the same time making sure locally skilled people don't miss out on work.”

He also announced the revised annual Skilled Occupation List (SOL), which reflected changes in skill shortage areas.

“The SOL is an important tool to meet demand for skills and includes a number of highly valued and skilled occupations across a range of industries including medical, engineering and mechanical services. It's important this list focusses on occupations in genuine need in the medium to long term and the up-to-date SOL maintains the government's targeted approach to skilled migration.”

The SOL is based on the advice of the independent Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency (AWPA) and applies to independent migrants seeking to come to Australia.

<http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/general-skilled-migration/skilled-occupation-list.htm>

Annual Update of Skilled Occupation List - 1 July 2013

Summary of changes to the SOL

Occupations removed from the SOL

ANZSCO Code	Occupation
251511	Hospital Pharmacist
251513	Retail Pharmacist
323111	Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (Avionics)
323112	Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (Mechanical)
323113	Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (Structures)

Occupations on the SOL from 1 July 2013

ANZSCO Code	Occupation
133111	Construction Project Manager
133112	Project Builder
133211	Engineering Manager
133513	Production Manager (Mining)
134111	Child Care Centre Manager
134211	Medical Administrator
134212	Nursing Clinical Director
134213	Primary Health Organisation Manager

134214	Welfare Centre Manager
221111	Accountant (General)
221112	Management Accountant
221113	Taxation Accountant
221213	External Auditor
221214	Internal Auditor
224111	Actuary
224511	Land Economist
224512	Valuer
231212	Ship's Engineer
231213	Ship's Master
231214	Ship's Officer
232111	Architect
232112	Landscape Architect
232213	Cartographer
232214	Other Spatial Scientist
232212	Surveyor
232611	Urban and Regional Planner
233111	Chemical Engineer
233112	Materials Engineer
233211	Civil Engineer
233212	Geotechnical Engineer
233213	Quantity Surveyor
233214	Structural Engineer
233215	Transport Engineer
233311	Electrical Engineer
233411	Electronics Engineer
233511	Industrial Engineer
233512	Mechanical Engineer
233513	Production or Plant Engineer
233611	Mining Engineer (Excluding Petroleum)
233612	Petroleum Engineer
233911	Aeronautical Engineer
233912	Agricultural Engineer
233913	Biomedical Engineer
233914	Engineering Technologist
233915	Environmental Engineer
233916	Naval Architect
234111	Agricultural Consultant
234112	Agricultural Scientist
234113	Forester
234611	Medical Laboratory Scientist
234711	Veterinarian
234912	Metallurgist
234914	Physicist (Medical Physicist only)
241111	Early Childhood (Pre-Primary School) Teacher
241411	Secondary School Teacher
241511	Special Needs Teacher
241512	Teacher of the Hearing Impaired
241513	Teacher of the Sight Impaired
241599	Special Education Teachers nec
251211	Medical Diagnostic Radiographer
251212	Medical Radiation Therapist

251213	Nuclear Medicine Technologist
251214	Sonographer
251311	Environmental Health Officer
251312	Occupational Health and Safety Advisor
251411	Optometrist
252111	Chiropractor
252112	Osteopath
252311	Dental Specialist
252312	Dentist
252411	Occupational Therapist
252511	Physiotherapist
252611	Podiatrist
252712	Speech Pathologist
253111	General Medical Practitioner
253211	Anaesthetist
253311	Specialist Physician (General Medicine)
253312	Cardiologist
253313	Clinical Haematologist
253314	Medical Oncologist
253315	Endocrinologist
253316	Gastroenterologist
253317	Intensive Care Specialist
253318	Neurologist
253321	Paediatrician
253322	Renal Medicine Specialist
253323	Rheumatologist
253324	Thoracic Medicine Specialist
253399	Specialist Physicians nec
253411	Psychiatrist
253511	Surgeon (General)
253512	Cardiothoracic Surgeon
253513	Neurosurgeon
253514	Orthopaedic Surgeon
253515	Otorhinolaryngologist
253516	Paediatric Surgeon
253517	Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon
253518	Urologist
253521	Vascular Surgeon
253911	Dermatologist
253912	Emergency Medicine Specialist
253913	Obstetrician and Gynaecologist
253914	Ophthalmologist
253915	Pathologist
253917	Diagnostic and Interventional Radiologist
253918	Radiation Oncologist
253999	Medical Practitioners nec
254111	Midwife
254411	Nurse Practitioner
254412	Registered Nurse (Aged Care)
254413	Registered Nurse (Child and Family Health)
254414	Registered Nurse (Community Health)
254415	Registered Nurse (Critical Care and Emergency)
254416	Registered Nurse (Development Disability)

254417	Registered Nurse (Disability and Rehabilitation)
254418	Registered Nurse (Medical)
254421	Registered Nurse (Medical Practice)
254422	Registered Nurse (Mental Health)
254423	Registered Nurse (Perioperative)
254424	Registered Nurse (Surgical)
254499	Registered Nurse nec
261111	ICT business Analyst
261112	Systems Analyst
261311	Analyst Programmer
261312	Developer Programmer
261313	Software Engineer
263111	Computer Network and Systems Engineer
263311	Telecommunications Engineer
263312	Telecommunications Network Engineer
271111	Barrister
271311	Solicitor
272311	Clinical Psychologist
272312	Educational Psychologist
272313	Organisational Psychologist
272314	Psychotherapist
272399	Psychologists nec
272511	Social Worker
312211	Civil Engineering Draftsperson
312212	Civil Engineering Technician
312311	Electrical Engineering Draftsperson
312312	Electrical Engineering Technician
313211	Radio Communications Technician
313212	Telecommunications Field Engineer
313213	Telecommunications Network Planner
313214	Telecommunications Technical Officer or Technologist
321111	Automotive Electrician
321211	Motor Mechanic (General)
321212	Diesel Motor Mechanic
321213	Motorcycle Mechanic
321214	Small Engine Mechanic
322211	Sheetmetal Trades Worker
322311	Metal Fabricator
322312	Pressure Welder
322313	Welder (First Class)
323211	Fitter (General)
323212	Fitter and Turner
323213	Fitter-Welder
323214	Metal Machinist (First Class)
323313	Locksmith
331112	Stonemason
331211	Carpenter and Joiner
331212	Carpenter
331213	Joiner
332211	Painting trades workers
333111	Glazier
333211	Fibrous Plasterer
333212	Solid Plasterer

334111	Plumber (General)
334112	Airconditioning and Mechanical Services Plumber
334113	Drainer
334114	Gasfitter
334115	Roof plumber
341111	Electrician (General)
341112	Electrician (Special Class)
341113	Lift Mechanic
342111	Airconditioning and Refrigeration Mechanic
342211	Electrical Linesworker
342212	Technical Cable Jointer
342313	Electronic Equipment Trades Worker
342314	Electronic Instrument Trades Worker (General)
342315	Electronic Instrument Trades Worker (Special Class)
399111	Boat Builder and Repairer
399112	Shipwright
411211	Dental Hygienist
411212	Dental Prosthetist
411213	Dental Technician
411214	Dental Therapist

<http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/bo/2013/bo204039.htm>

Applicants with occupations on the SOL are eligible to apply for a Subclass 189 or an eligible relative sponsored 489 visa. For a full list of occupations on the CSOL see <http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/general-skilled-migration/pdf/csol.pdf> . Applicants with occupations on this list can apply for a State nominated, Subclass 190 or 489 visa, or an employer sponsored visa.

For more information contact [David Bitel](#) or [Jia Li](#) in our office.

Migration agent committed for trial

A former registered migration agent based in Sydney's Chinatown, Xiao Ying Wu (Amy Wu), has been committed to a two-week trial commencing on September 23, 2013.

The trial will be the culmination of a Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) investigation that alleges Wu committed multiple fraud offences under the Commonwealth Criminal Code and the NSW Crimes Act involving deception and the use of false documents.

A DIAC spokesman said the Department's investigation began in response to a number of complaints by clients of the former registered migration agent who collectively alleged Wu dishonestly obtained more than \$80 000 in return for visa application services that were never delivered.

"The Department takes allegations of fraud by those in trusted positions, such as registered migration agents, very seriously."

He said the former registered migration agent had ceased operating her business in Chinatown in 2010.

Migration agents are required by law to be registered with the Office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority (MARA).

<http://www.newsroom.immi.gov.au/releases/former-chinatown-based-migration-agent-committed-for-trial>

Charities struggle

A new underclass of 100,000 asylum seekers living on as little as \$220 a week, and with no rights to work, could be created in just five years if current trends continue.

Charities have warned they are unable to cope with the rising tide of impoverished asylum seekers, with one centre closing its doors to new clients after being "swamped" with requests for food aid.

The Government introduced its "no-advantage" policy on August 13, 2012 saying people who arrived by boat would have their protection claims processed no more quickly than those who waited for a humanitarian visa in a refugee camp. Since then, a record 19,760 people have sought Australia's protection.

Since October 2011, 16,477 people have been released on bridging visas while their claims for protection are considered. Of these, 7256 are subject to the Government's no-advantage policies, meaning they have no rights to work and are eligible for just 89 per cent of the dole - about \$220 a week.

Heather Holst, the chief executive of the housing charity HomeGround, said her agency was bracing for more asylum seekers to be released. She said the agency had recorded a 195 per cent rise in clients from Pakistan, and an increase of 182 per cent in housing requests from asylum seekers from Afghanistan.

She said "We're just seeing this big group of asylum seekers with very limited income."

This involved a husband and wife, who asked not to be identified, forced to live for months in a garage with no toilet. The couple were allowed to use the toilet inside the adjoining house at set times.

"I just think they're unintended consequences of releasing people into the community," she said.

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/political-news/charities-struggle-as-human-tide-keeps-rising-20130528-2n9mh.html>

Community refugee sponsorship trial begins

For the first time, community organisations such as ethnic groups, church groups, and NGOs can nominate people at risk in overseas locations for resettlement here in Australia.

Former Minister for Immigration and Citizenship Brendan O'Connor announced the start of a community proposal pilot for up to 500 visa places under Australia's humanitarian program.

The Government's community proposal pilot is for individuals and families in humanitarian situations outside Australia who have links with established communities and networks in Australia.

"We are now acting on the calls of community groups to give organisations an opportunity to nominate people at risk overseas to be reunited with family or friends here in Australia. Under the pilot, communities in Australia may be able financially contribute to bring those individuals or families to live permanently in Australia. The pilot will encourage stronger partnership between community organisations and the government in the resettlement of people. It will also build on the goodwill that we know exists in our communities and will facilitate the reuniting of families," he said.

<http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/bo/2013/bo203900.htm>

Canberra Asks Athens to Step Up VISA Agreement

The Vice President of the Australian Parliament, Steve Georganas of Greek descent, reiterated that Australia is ready to sign an intergovernmental agreement with Greece on the tourist visas about the working permit, but "Athens is delaying the procedures".

"Both the Greek Foreign Minister Dimitris Avramopoulos and Deputy Foreign Minister Konstantinos Tsiaras assured me that there is no problem with the agreement proposed to them," Georganas stated on the SBS Greek state radio program and added:

"The whole preparation has been made. There is an agreement, but it has not been signed yet for reasons that we do not understand."

The Australian government is being pressed by the Diaspora Greeks on this issue. Due to the crisis and unemployment in Greece, there is much interest in migration to Australia. However, the immigration policy is very stringent. With this agreement young people from 18-30 could visit Australia for a year and work simultaneously.

<http://au.greekreporter.com/2013/06/03/canberra-asks-athens-to-step-up-visa-agreement/>

SMS scam warning for visa holders

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) has warned temporary working holiday visa holders to be aware of scam text messages which appear to be from the Department, seeking final payments for their visa application.

The text messages are targeting international communities in Australia holding temporary working holiday visas.

A Departmental spokesman said it was a well-organised ruse to con visa holders into transferring a purported "unpaid Government fee", when none is needed.

"The Department has received information from a number of clients who have been sent these text messages, which directs them to a bogus web page that appears to be from DIAC," the spokesman said.

"Anyone who receives this type of text message seeking payment should ignore the message."

<http://www.newsroom.immi.gov.au/releases/sms-scam-warning-for-visa-holders>

Australian visa pricing changes to drive use of online services

New visa pricing arrangements to begin on 1 July 2013 will encourage Department of Immigration and Citizenship clients to use online services where available. Visa pricing measures already in place include a visa evidence charge, first announced by the Australian Government in November 2011.

From July 1, a "per-person" charge will apply to each family member included in a visa application. They will each be required to pay the visa application charge.

"This will bring Australia's visa pricing arrangements into line with comparable countries," a Department of Immigration and Citizenship spokesman said today.

There will be an additional charge of AUD80 for certain visas when visa applicants choose to lodge a paper application rather than an online application through the Department's eVisa service (where this service is available).

There will also be an extra charge of AUD700 for visa applicants who seek to stay in Australia for extended periods on successive temporary visas.

Refugee and humanitarian visa applicants will be unaffected by the changes.

<http://www.newsroom.immi.gov.au/releases/australian-visa-pricing-changes-to-drive-use-of-online-services>

Visa delays stall foreign investment

More than \$1.7 billion in foreign investment, including funding for crucial government infrastructure projects, remains in limbo due to a slow visa approval process of applications for the new significant investment visa by federal authorities.

Figures obtained by Fairfax Media reveal just one "significant investor" visa has been approved, and the delays have cost the Victorian and NSW governments hundreds of millions in potential funds.

The significant investor visa gives residence to cashed-up applicants with \$5 million or more to invest in Australia - without the usual age, language or residency requirements - and matches similar schemes in Britain, the United States, Singapore, Canada and New Zealand. After four years that residency becomes permanent.

More than 350 investors, each pledging at least \$5 million, have been nominated by the Victorian, NSW, Queensland and Western Australian governments since the program began in November.

An Immigration Department spokeswoman said processing times for applications under the significant investor visa program would be up to nine months as "the Department develops organisational expertise for this new visa".

A range of background checks including potential issues about health, character and national security, also affect processing times, the spokeswoman said.

The majority of significant investor visa applicants - both the expressions of interest and the invitations sent out - are from China.

Applicants must invest at least \$5 million over four years.

"They need to be able to show that their investment will provide a boost to GDP," said the spokeswoman for the Immigration Department.

<http://www.smh.com.au/business/visa-delays-stall-foreign-investment-20130623-2oqpf.html>

Refugee children without parents

Orphans and refugee children who have arrived alone in Australia have had the budget for their care slashed almost in half by the federal government.

The unaccompanied minors, who have arrived without family, including orphans whose parents were lost at sea, and have been found to be refugees, require 24-hour care until they are 18 years old.

But the money put aside by the government for their care has been cut from \$23.8 million to \$11.6 million in 2013-14 and will be slashed again to \$4 million in the following financial year. The money spent on their care in 2013-14 has gone from about \$23,000 for each child a year to \$12,000 based on the 977 children in care as at October last year.

If there were the same number of children in 2014-15, there would be just over \$4000 allocated to each child to care for them.

Wendy Southern, deputy secretary for the policy and program management group at the Department of Immigration, told Senate estimates the cuts were a reflection of changed funding models.

She said the funding was driven by demand, but that was being revisited in light of new programs, such as the Refugee Youth Support Pilot, which put children aged 16 to 17 who need less supervision into shared accommodation. "You would anticipate that a model where you do not have to have 24-hour care would be less expensive."

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/political-news/funds-halved-for-refugee-children-without-parents-20130602-2nk0l.html>

Refugee Week 2013 – Restoring Hope

From hard luck life to the lucky country Refugees deserve second chances too

Organised by the Refugee Council of Australia, Refugee Week is Australia's peak annual activity to raise awareness and celebrate refugees. This year's theme is "restoring hope", symbolising that while a refugee's journey begins with danger, it also begins with hope.

Ambassador for Refugee Week and owner of misschu, Nahji Chu, came to Australia as a refugee in 1978 when she was nine, after escaping the horrors of the Pathet Lao regime in Laos.

"Thank you, Australia, for having accepted me as a refugee," she said. "It's changed my life profoundly. I would like to use myself and my business success as an example of how amazing Australia can be if it was as generous as it used to be ... the land of opportunity that we were.

"Refugee Week is important as it is a time to celebrate and for Australians to understand the hard work migrants and refugees have put into Australia. What happens when you are a refugee is that you have a hunger to succeed and to work in order to prove yourself and a hunger to strive for a better life than what you came from."

After arriving in Australia from Guinea, Yarrie Bangura never thought she would, in a few years, be the star of the Baulkham Hills African Ladies dance troupe and an ambassador for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Putting it down to her zeal for life and her love of peace, she launched Australia's International Refugee Week, giving the keynote speech titled *Restoring Hope*.

"My life before Australia wasn't pleasant," Bangura said. "It was full of horror and fear and poverty. I came here for a fresh beginning and with me brought a passion for preaching peace, a passion for non-violence and a passion of bringing people together. I found a new opportunity right there in front of me."

Hana Sadiq came to Australia from Iraq, following persecution for Christianity, to secure a safe future for her children. Winning the education category of the NSW Humanitarian Awards for her work with students and the parents at the Miller Intensive English Centre over the past 10 years, she says Refugee Week is a time when people can appreciate the effort refugees make to adjust.

"They come here often knowing no English," Sadiq said. "They quickly learn it, go through high school, complete university and get good jobs to help build the Australian future. I am proud seeing them contribute to the Australian community."

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/journeys-of-hope-inspire-true-stories-at-refugee-week-20130619-2oixn.html>

Refugee Council of Australia

"My family and I came to Australia because it gave us the chance to build a new life, free from war, poverty and persecution. I am very grateful to Australia and its people for the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from being part of an inclusive, strong and prosperous community. As Refugee Week Ambassador, I want to tell not just my story but the stories of many others like me who came here from around the world in search of hope and opportunity and are now proud to call themselves Australian."

info@refugeecouncil.org.au

Refugees find strength to carry on as war rages

The young woman sits in a chair, eyes closed, as the make-up artist transforms her into a bride, with dramatic kohl-rimmed eyes and glossy dark hair piled high. Beside her in the makeshift salon three wedding dresses hang. It is a big day for 20-year-old Hana - she is marrying Shukri, 24, a man from a neighbouring village in Daraa province in Syria.

The ceremony and party afterwards were held in the world's second-largest refugee camp, in the desert in the north of Jordan. Her uncle, Abu Hussein al-Hariri, tells the story.

"Today we are having a wedding for my niece," he says, in his family's "caravan", or temporary home - an improvement from the tents supplied by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

"Just because we are refugees doesn't mean we stop living. People will get married, people will die and the wheel of life will just continue to roll."

<http://newsstore.fairfax.com.au/apps/viewDocument.ac?page=1&sy=nstore&kw=Refugees+find+strength+to+carry+on+as+war+rages&pb=smh&dt=selectRange&dr=week&so=relevance&sf=headline&rc=10&rm=200&sp=nrm&clsPage=1&docID=SMH130620NS7C16QGNLV>

Living in Australia

All Australians are entitled to freedom of speech, association, assembly, religion, and movement.

Freedom of speech

Australians are free, within the bounds of the law, to say or write what we think privately or publicly, about the government, or about any topic. We do not censor the media and may criticise the government without fear of arrest. Free speech comes from facts, not rumours, and the intention must be constructive, not to do harm. There are laws to protect a person's good name and integrity against false information. There are laws against saying or writing things to incite hatred against others because of their culture, ethnicity or background. Freedom of speech is not an excuse to harm others.

Freedom of association

We are free to join any organisation or group if it is legal. We can choose to belong to a trade union or to a political party. Having and debating points of view allows for a healthy and strong democracy.

Freedom of assembly

We are free to meet with other people in public or private places. We can meet in small or large groups for legal social or political purposes. Being able to protest and to demonstrate is an accepted form of free expression. Protestors must not be violent or break laws such as assaulting others or trespassing on private or public property. People can change governments in a peaceful way by elections and not by violence.

Freedom of religion

Australia does not have an official or state religion. The law does not enforce any religious doctrine, however, religious practices must conform to the law. We are free to follow any religion we choose. We are also free not to have a religion.

Freedom of movement

We can move freely to and from all states and territories. We can leave and return to Australia at any time. Some migrants may have conditions placed on their visa until they become Australian citizens.

<http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/choose-australia/about-australia/five-freedoms.htm>

Resources

1. *Australia's Migration Trends.*

See: Australia's Migration Trends 2011–12 Edition

2. The SOL is available from the Department of Immigration of Citizenships (DIAC) website.

See: Annual Update of Skilled Occupation List - 1 July 2013

Parish Patience Immigration

Lawyers
Level 1, State Street Centre
338 Pitt Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Australia

Tel: +61 2 9286 8700

Fax: +61 2 9283 3323

Email: ppmail@ppilaw.com.au

www.ppilaw.com.au

