

MIGRATION INSTITUTE
— OF AUSTRALIA —

Senator the Hon Chris Evans
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

9 July 2008

Dear Minister

I am writing to seek your urgent intervention into a practice that your department has just implemented in relation to the grant of 457 visas.

Applicants for 457 visas have for a long time received approval letters that have invited them to collect a visa label. Recently, clients of some Registered Migration Agents who have received these letters have reported that they have been turned away by your department when they sought visa labels. They were simply advised that “the department no longer issues visa labels as there is access to the *Visa Entitlement Verification Online* system (VEVO).

The possible future abolition of visa labels has been discussed by your department for some time but the Migration Institute of Australia had been assured that this was for the future and that suitable arrangements would be developed beforehand to ensure that the needs of visa holders and other stakeholders were met. While the arrangement appear inconsistent between offices, the apparent sudden implementation of this measure in some offices of your department in relation to 457 visas without any consultation or modification to the VEVO system to meet the needs of visa holders, employer sponsors and their Registered Migration Agents is of considerable concern.

As you would be aware, visa labels set out the subclass of the visa issued and detail the conditions applying to the visa. VEVO only advises whether the visa holder is entitled to work and sets out any work limitations. It does not even advise of the subclass of visa held, let alone detail the visa conditions that apply to the holder of the visa.

This means that at the very time that you have announced the intention to strengthen employer obligations towards 457 visa holders, due to a relatively small number of breaches of obligations and visa conditions, your department has denied visa holders, employer sponsors and their Registered Migration Agents access to knowledge about the very visa conditions that are central to the visa.

The problem is simple – VEVO does not allow Registered Migration Agents to access the information about visas that is necessary for them to properly advise their clients (both sponsor and visa holder alike) about the conditions which apply to the visa.

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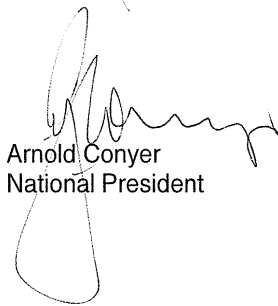
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The solution is equally simple – modify VEVO so that information of the type already available to departmental staff in relation to visa subclass and visa conditions is available to visa holders, employers and Registered Migration Agents. If such system changes would take time, we would suggest that visa labels, approval letters or some other means of advising affected stakeholders (including Registered Migration Agents if they are involved the case) be urgently implemented.

I look forward to your early advice on this matter.

Yours sincerely



Arnold Conyer
National President