

MIGRATION PROFESSION'S OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE: REPORT

Even though they assist thousands of potential Australians to live and work here, migration agents have been slammed as poorly trained and shonky. But Registered Migration Agents are standing up for the profession, determined to raise standards and strengthen ethics.

The Migration Institute of Australia commissioned an independent researcher to undertake a study of stakeholders' perceptions of the Australian migration advice profession. This report, entitled **Changing Together**, is released today.

Stakeholders who deal with Registered Migration Agents were interviewed for the study. They included university educators, skills assessment authorities, migrant resource centres, refugee advocates, parliamentarians, courts and tribunals, departmental officials and media.

Many respondents were quick to point out that most agents regularly perform to a high standard; unfortunately, a troublesome minority make a disproportionately negative impact on the image of all migration agents.

The findings have been compiled along with proposals for reform put forward by the migration advice profession in response to the research. Opportunities for change include:

- Comprehensive reform to the education and training of agents
- Requiring current Registered Migration Agents to requalify to a higher standard of English language and professional competence
- Introduce a tiered system of registration to protect consumers
- Formation of an independent complaints body with the power to review fees

Responsibility for bringing about change should be shared by all stakeholders, including the Department of Immigration and Citizenship in their new role managing the profession's regulation authority, the Office of the MARA.

As the professional association, the Migration Institute of Australia knows that agents have taken ownership of the issues. The next step is to develop co-operative strategies with other stakeholders to implement the action plans from the report.

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About the Migration Institute of Australia:

The MIA is the peak representative body for the Australian migration advice profession and advances the interests of Registered Migration Agent (RMA) members.

Registered Migration Agents provide professional services to applicants and sponsors for temporary visas and permanent migration. RMAs facilitate the process of migration by advising people on visa applications and presenting their cases in the strongest way.

The Institute was appointed by the Australian Government between 1998 and 1 July 2009 to act as the Migration Agents Registration Authority (MARA), which regulates the migration advice profession.

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