

Discussion Paper

For comment by members of the Migration Institute of Australia

Proposed membership structure of the Migration Institute of Australia

“There’s only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that’s your own self”

Aldous Huxley
English Novelist and Critic
1894 - 1963



February 2010

GLOSSARY

AEI	Australian Education International
AFMIA	Associate Fellow of Migration Institute of Australia
DIAC	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
EA	Education Agent
EATC	Education Agent Training Course
IES	International Education Services
FMIA	Fellow of Migration Institute of Australia
MIA	Migration Institute of Australia
MMIA	Member of Migration Institute of Australia
OMARA	Office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority
QEACD	Qualified Education Agent Counsellor Database
RMA	Registered Migration Agent

INTRODUCTION

The Migration Institute of Australia represents over 2000 registered migration agents, 260 students enrolled in migration-related university degrees and 25 individuals who are affiliated with the profession.

This discussion paper provides an opportunity for members of the Migration Institute of Australia to assess the professional categories of membership as offered currently by the Institute and to review the proposed restructure.

The Institute's 2009-2011 *Strategic Plan* identified membership development as an important vehicle for progression towards the MIA's vision for a society where migration is valued and the professionalism of MIA migration advisors is recognised by all stakeholders.

The scope of the Strategic Plan's recommended action is to research and map membership categories to demographics, investigate expanding member categories, assess educational requirements and qualifying criteria, and identify membership progression pathways and relevant benefits.

RESEARCH

It was identified through the independent report *Changing Together: Perceptions and proposals for reform from stakeholders in the migration advice community* (June 2009), conducted on behalf of **the Institute**, that tiered membership with the ability for progression may enhance consumer protection and the professionalism of RMAs. It could also offer senior practitioners recognition of their superior training and experience, as well as supporting graduate RMAs.

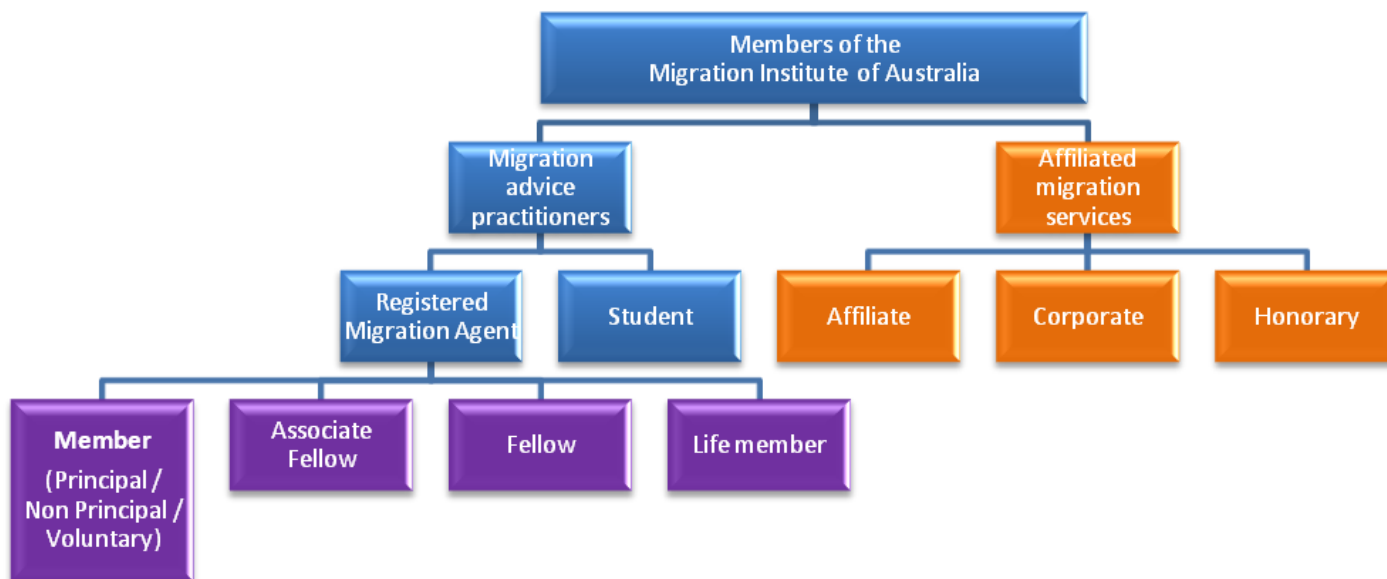
The current membership was analysed to assess the length of those involved in the profession and to ensure the proposed changes are reflective and appropriately developed. This was to ensure there was no possibility of creating an unachievable or unrealistic pathway for those new to the profession or a top heavy membership base.

New membership categories and expansion of current categories were discussed by the MIA's Membership Working Group (see Appendix A) to allow for those with an interest in the profession to be able to continue to be affiliated with the Institute through a more structured and streamlined approach. These non RMA groups were identified as qualified education agents, administrative staff of registered migration agents and academics.

Similar professional associations were analysed for comparison to ensure the proposed categories and qualifying criteria were consistent with other professions.

CURRENT STRUCTURE

The current levels of membership available to members are as follows:



MIGRATION ADVICE

Principal Member

An RMA who is working independently or for an organisation which does not have any other MIA members working within it.

Non Principal Member

An RMA who is working for an organisation which employs another member of the Institute.

Voluntary Member

An RMA who is registered with the Office of the MARA as a non-fee charging agent.

Associate Fellow

Awarded to those that have demonstrated by conduct and service a commitment to the aims of the migration advice profession.

Fellow

Awarded to those that have demonstrated by exemplary conduct and distinguished service a commitment to the aims of the migration advice profession.

Life Member

This is the pinnacle award of the MIA. It is a rare acknowledgement of a worthy and lasting bond with the Institute.

Student Subscriber

Individuals who are currently enrolled in a course of study relating to the migration advice profession and are not otherwise eligible to be a Member of a different category.

AFFILIATED MIGRATION SERVICES

Affiliate Member

Individuals who have expressed a desire to improve their knowledge of the migration advice profession by active association with Members and participation in Members' activities and services.

Corporate Member

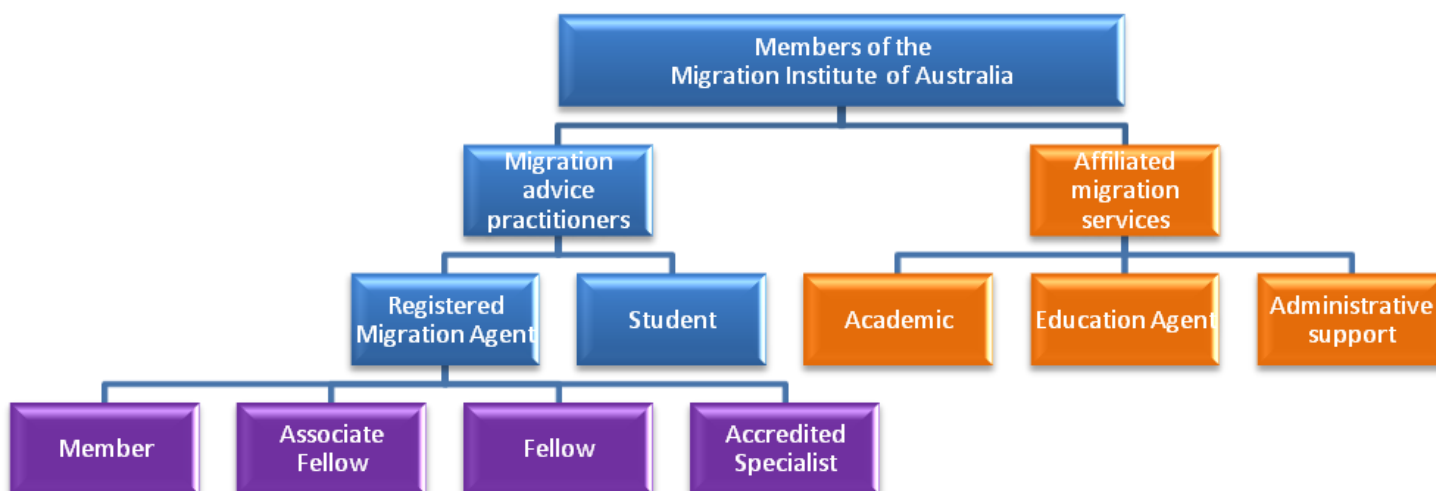
A company or partnership which is engaged in or has an interest in the migration advice profession or an associated endeavour.

Honorary Member

Individuals who are admitted through a resolution by the Board.

PROPOSED STRUCTURE

In order for the Institute to provide more effective and inclusive representation by expanding its membership and knowledge base, two streams of membership are proposed. The first stream consists of migration advice practitioners (RMAs and migration students) as per the current membership structure. The second stream acknowledges affiliated membership services such as education agents, academics and support staff.



MIGRATION ADVICE

Student

The category of student subscriber will be available to those enrolled in a course of study relating to the migration advice profession; and are not otherwise eligible to be a Member of a different class. Student subscribers will not have voting rights.

Member

The category of member will be available for Registered Migration Agents and will stand for the first four years of migration advice.

Members of the Institute will have voting rights and be eligible to use the post nominals of MMIA.

Associate Fellow

The category of Associate Fellow will be available for Registered Migration Agents who have been registered for between five and nine years with the Office of the MARA (OMARA). The progression is not automatic, with other qualifying criteria set to include a combination of the following:

- completion of MIA mentoring program*
- completion of 60 CPD points over the first four years in the profession
- submission of professional portfolio
- letter of recommendation

**Note: exemption available for those in supervised practise with the provision of documentation from the principal agent outlining internal mentoring and practical experience.*

Associate Fellows of the Institute will have voting rights and be eligible to use the post nominals of AFMIA.

Fellow

The category of Fellow will be available for Registered Migration Agents who have been registered for over 10 years with the Office of the MARA (OMARA). The progression is not automatic, with other qualifying criteria set to include a combination of the following:

- preparation and / or delivery of continuing professional development activities
- original research articles
- submission of portfolio
- letter of recommendation
- completion of migration specialist exam

An accelerated pathway will be available for those who want to progress to Fellowship level through completion of the above requirements without the ten years of experience. Individuals must apply through the Institute to be considered.

Fellows of the Institute will have voting rights and be eligible to use the post nominals of FMIA.

Accredited Specialist

The category of Accredited Specialist is awarded by external bodies to those who have completed the accreditation courses as run by various Law Societies in Australia. The Institute recognises the standing of this level of expertise and the comprehensive examination process that must be undertaken to achieve this status.

Accredited Specialists in Immigration Law will have voting rights and be eligible to use the post nominals of ASMIA

Life Member

This is the pinnacle award of the MIA. It is a rare acknowledgement of a worthy and lasting bond with the Institute.

Life Members will have voting rights and be eligible to use the post nominals of LMIA.

AFFILIATED MIGRATION SERVICES

The field of migrations services is broad and diverse. There are a range of people who are interested in the work and activities of MIA who are precluded from participation or recognition. The current affiliated member category is very narrow. This proposal allows for three new groups to be affiliated with MIA and thereby participate in services it has to offer.

Note: none of the affiliated migration service categories carry voting rights in MIA elections or constitutional change.

Education Agent

Many Education Agents work hand in hand with RMA's. To recognise this service, a new category of membership is proposed.

The category of Education Agent is available to those who have completed the Education Agent Training Course (EATC) offered by International Education Services (IES) in partnership with Australian Education International (AEI) and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC).

To be eligible for the affiliate membership, the agent must be listed on the Qualified Education Agent Counsellor Database (QEACD) and supply a current certificate of completion.

Administrative support

This category will be open to those who work as support staff for Registered Migration Agents. The application must be accompanied by a supporting letter from the RMA stating the reasoning for their affiliation.

Academic

This category is available for academics and educators working in the field of migration research, economics, sociology, politics and law who wish to have an affiliation with the peak industry body supporting the migration advice profession.

