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Mr Tim Bryant
Inquiry Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Via email: legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Bryant

I refer to your letter of 18 June 2013 inviting the Australian Motor Industry Federation (AMIF) to make a submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs inquiry into the *Migration Amendment (Temporary Sponsored Visas) Bill (Cth) 2013*.

While being sensitive of the time constraints placed on this Inquiry, AMIF would wish to make it a matter of record that it does not feel that this timeframe is conducive to the collection of specific evidence from among its Member Bodies to verify, to the Committee, its position on this matter.

Indeed AMIF is perplexed at the speed in which these proposed changes are being introduced to Parliament, completely ignorant of longstanding consultation mechanisms with the community and its representatives.

Nevertheless, the Committee can be assured that the comments following -- while more general in nature -- are based on AMIF's long, formal, association with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship in connection with the Sub-class 457 Visa programme, as well as its knowledge of anecdotal -- yet reliable -- member accounts of the current state of the labour market in the retail motor trades and of the operation of the 457 Visa scheme within that market.

The retail, service, repair and recycling sectors of the Australian automotive industry are ones facing critical skills shortages. A recent report by Auto Skills Australia -- the body charged with the responsibility for training and skills development in the industry -- showed that the national automotive workforce has decreased by 16,000 over the previous 12 months, with 13,700 of those in the automotive repair and maintenance sectors. The report also revealed a shortage within the industry of 19,000 skilled mechanics alone in 2012 /2013. There are also documented shortages in other motor trades professions with many attributable to the impact of the skills needs of other industries such as mining and resources.

Despite industry efforts to meet the demands imposed by skills shortages of this magnitude and severity, there nevertheless remains shortfall in critical areas as evidenced, by the continuing inclusion of specific motor trades professions on the Skilled Occupations list.

One of the only options available to industry to combat these shortages is the 457 Visa programme, which has also contributed significantly to skills maintenance and improvement within the industry broadly, as well as to specific business viability. The Sub-class 457 Visa programme works exactly as intended, as far as the Motor Industry is concerned.

Through its long-standing formal relationship with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's Out-posted Officer initiative, AMIF has a deep and detailed understanding of the metrics of the Sub-class 457 Visa programme (and of immigration more broadly).

It is possibly better positioned than other industries to understand the idiosyncracies of the programme, its application, and compliance. We have not had any documented cases of fraudulent behaviour or abuses of the program, which AMIF understands are the key drivers suggesting the need for the proposed changes. A case we believe is not proven.

Indeed much of the dialogue between AMIF's member bodies and motor traders are the nuances of the scheme itself, its application and its compliance requirements.


AMIF is at a loss to understand what inefficiencies or 'gaps' exist in the current arrangements and therefore does not support any 'wholesale' or 'broad brush' changes to a scheme. At best it appears the proposed changes are the result of issues that are alleged to be occurring at the margins of specific industry sectors. Perhaps those administering the programme should target those cases only rather than the broad-brush imposition on industry sectors that are benefitting and are compliant.

The Bill, if passed and adopted, would impose further unnecessary administrative and regulatory burdens upon an industry sector that is, for all intents and purposes, an 'innocent bystander' in the context of the allegations of behaviour in other industry sectors. AMIF might reasonably ponder why its members might need to be forced to comply with additional burdens for reasons they have not given cause to; as might a good many other industry sectors likewise ponder.

In summary, AMIF does not support the introduction of the proposed changes to the Sub-class 457 Visa scheme. AMIF sees them as unnecessary, particularly when, in all probability, mechanisms already exist that could address the concerns directed at practices alleged within other industry sectors.

AMIF thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide these comments. If there is any further clarification or information that the Committee thinks AMIF can provide to be of assistance to it in this Inquiry, please do not hesitate to contact this Office.

Yours sincerely



Richard Dudley
Chief Executive Officer

19 June 2013

CC: Colin Duckworth
AMIF Director Policy

