

To whom it may concern

Dear Sirs,

It is with deep regret that I find myself engaging in this correspondence. Regret, because like many others, I have been lured to this fine country as a temporary resident on the basis that in exchange for my "much needed , qualifications and experience", a specific set of terms would ensue by way of my remuneration package. To my mind, when I was invited as a Consultant to come to Australia and assist industry in my particular field, a 'Contract', both real and ethereal were compiled whereby the inviting party / employer promised me and my family a certain lifestyle based on both the level of compensation/salary AND the allowances afforded people such as myself by the Commonwealth Government. Such allowances are few and far between and in ,he only such term of any consequence is the Living Away from Home Allowance (LAHA) which for many years has helped new comers to this beautiful country reconcile themselves with the high cost of living and the extremely high taxation levels. For those that have come here with the long term aim of perhaps applying for residency, this allowance has assisted in the initial settlement period and allowed them to do so while minimising the financial burdens placed upon them via those initial expenses and the ongoing cost of living and taxation costs. For people such as myself, Consultants who have been invited here for a specific period in order to share knowledge, expertise and indeed leave a legacy of same behind, this LAHA is most certainly the single item that can make the difference between an assignment being worthwhile or not from a financial perspective. Without this allowance, I am certain that a great many of the international experts brought here to support the advancement of Australian, Science, Technology and Industry simply would not make that decision to do so. Having been invited to come here for the reasons stated above and been offered a particular set of terms and conditions to do so, it is inconceivable to me that during the term of my particular 457 Visa, such terms may be altered to my detriment and that of my family. This is indeed no more than a simple breach of Contract, that tripartite Contract being between myself, my employer and the Commonwealth of Australia. It is worthy of note that people in my circumstances typically retain a primary home elsewhere and both for economic and practical reasons, not to mention the restrictions placed upon us by the Federal Governments policy on foreign investors (FIRB etc), the choice to rent versus buy is to a great extent taken from us ie we have to rent property. Rentals are typically much higher here than in say Europe, but manageable due to the respite offered by the LAHA. Without this allowance, the financial burden imposed by rents would effectively double and many people I feel would consider this to be less than viable.

A very well known Australian once coined the phrase that Australia would have to "populate or perish". This is as pertinent today as it was 100 years ago and this great nation could become one of the great global forces scientifically and economically if it continues to attract the very best from around the world. By approving this proposed LAHA reform in its current form, I fear that the cost to Australia will be far greater than any perceived additional monies paid into the Treasury as a consequence of same.

I would respectfully urge your Government to look to the bigger picture when considering the very real impacts of this reform and to do so with the welfare and future of this nation at heart rather than perhaps, as is so often the case in politics, the opportunity to look good on the day to the masses.

I personally know of at least half a dozen global subject matter experts who were considering a move to Australia, who are now debating whether or not this is a worthwhile prospect. These very same people are among those that could and would help this great nation to take that next step towards global recognition as a world leader.

As I state above, it is with regret that I find myself writing this, as I genuinely believed that I had a Contract with the Australian Government and People for a four year period, that being the term of my 457 Visa and having had no intention of breaching the conditions of same myself, I assumed that neither would Australia. I shall be extremely disappointed and like many others will of course have to consider my options and mot probably leave.

Yours Sincerely,

Peter C.McIntyre  
General Manager