

To whom it may concern,

I would like to express my concern regarding the proposed amendments to the LAFHA structure as proposed by the Australian government. As a 457 visa holder from Canada who came to work as a research scientist at an Australian University, I have found Australia a difficult place to live, financially. My wife has not been able to gain employment here, despite being highly educated and experienced, and so we have been living on my salary. If the LAFHA allowance is abruptly taken away, this will result in at least a 16% reduction in my salary, an amount which will tip us over the knife's edge between being able to live in Sydney and not. In that case, I would be forced to seek employment elsewhere and leave Australia.

My hope is that the government, if it is determined to make this short-sighted move, will at least provide grandfathering provisions that will allow the gradual removal of this benefit. LAFHA may have been provided to me in a manner that was not originally intended by the relevant governmental agencies; I can understand that argument from the consultation paper even if I do not agree with it. But I moved here before these changes were proposed, and if they are enacted without any such grandfathering I will be unable to maintain a reasonable standard of living and will be forced to leave your country, taking my skills and expertise with me.

More broadly, I would argue to the Treasury that making these changes without thought to replacing them will only harm Australia's interests in the future. I know that many of my scientific colleagues who have moved here as I did are in the same position as I am, and many would have to leave Australia or change vocations in order to make enough money to live. Science is the fuel for the engine of innovation, and Australia benefits in ways that far exceed the cost of the LAFHA; punishing those of us who have come here to your country to work with your universities will only harm your future status as a global scientific leader. The scientific community is a small one, and Australia currently has a reputation as being supportive of science, but such a punitive move would significantly damage that reputation throughout the world.

In closing, I urge the Australian government to rethink their proposal on both humanitarian and economic grounds. Making these cuts would be penny wise and pound foolish, with consequences far beyond their budgetary gains.

Sincerely,

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