Letter to the Editor
Cathnews.com

Dear Sir/Madam,

Contrary to Bishop William Morris’ view in the article entitled *Toowoomba Bishop concerned about regional migrants’ rights (August 25)* on the Cathnews.com website, there are many pathways to permanent residency for the people in Australia on the subclass 457 visa.

There is a direct pathway to permanent residency, where that is the outcome sought by the visa holder and their business sponsor. In fact around 20 per cent of all holders of the temporary skilled business visa were granted permanent residency in 2005-06.

Australia’s world class migration program is not developed in isolation but rather in consultation with various bodies – most notably State and Local Governments.

State Governments are one of the highest users of the 457 programme and the Queensland Government is a so-called Regional Certifying Body, which attests to the need for skilled people in regional areas.

The impact that an intake of 457 visa holders may put on infrastructure in local communities, such as schools as referred by Bishop Morris, are matters that need to be considered in the planning by state, local agencies and employers recruiting skilled migrants and their families.

Of course this does not mean DIMA ignores concerns which may be raised regarding the ability of regional communities to meet the needs of temporary entrants. We are making progress towards addressing Bishop Morris’ concerns about 457 meat workers in his Diocese.

The department is currently negotiating a labour agreement with the meat industry and one aspect being considered is the effective management of newly-arrived temporary skilled workers and their families in regional communities. This includes a proposal that all 457 visa holders possess at least functional levels of English.

Yours sincerely,

Sandi Logan
National Communications Manager
Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs

30 August 2006