

To whom it may concern,

My husband and I are here from Canada on 457 visas. The LAFHA benefit is part of how we are able to afford living here and I would urge you to reconsider cutting it for temporary overseas skilled residents.

Unlike the figures quoted to the media, we do not earn hundreds of thousands of dollars. My husband's salary is \$74,129 (gross) and we currently receive approx. \$800 per month in LAFHA benefits, or about 16% of our take home net income. This amount allows us to meet our basic needs and live here. We do not have a car, we share housing accommodations, and are hardly living a lavish life style.

We still pay taxes in our home country, pay Australian taxes and pay a large amount of money on private health care because we cannot access Australian health care. What are the incentives for foreign nationals to come to or remain in Australia? There is an obvious reason why we are here - my husband was brought over by an Australian company as they saw an actual need for his expertise. Seeing that we may soon be operating at a loss to work away from home, why would we stay?

This action will have the result of leading to the loss of critical expertise in some sectors. You will lose experienced professionals to the Australian market and therefore the Australian economy. It is sort of ambivalent to see the Australian government gasping for skilled overseas workers with all their schemes, overseas job fairs and lists (ENSOL, SOL, MODL, ....), but labeling exactly these people ineligible for the LAFHA. I understand that there has been a lot misuse and abuse during the last years, but I think a better monitoring and supervision (control) throughout the application process would make more sense than scraping the eligibility altogether. Alternatively, why not grandfather the scheme, allowing those currently claiming LAFHA to continue to do so, while not allowing new visa applicants to do so.

I strongly urge you to reconsider the current changes being considered to the LAFHA benefit. While my husband and I would be saddened to leave Australia, taking our skills and contributions to your economy with us, this is exactly what we may be forced to do.

Regards,

Brandy Williams, BFA, BEd