

Jobs and Skills Australia
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
GPO Box 9828
Canberra ACT 2600

31 May 2024

Via email: CoreSkillsList@jobsandskills.gov.au

Dear Commissioner

RE: Draft Core Skills Occupations List (CSOL) for Consultation

The Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA), the peak body for a broad array of Australian travel professionals, welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to Jobs and Skills Australia in relation to the Draft Core Skills Occupations List (CSOL).

We have focused on the occupations of Travel Consultant, Travel Agency Manager and Tour Guide, which are identified in the draft CSOL 'Targeted for Consultation'.

Travel Consultants (ANZSCO Code 451612)

Travel Consultants are not currently eligible for skilled migration to Australia, however they are under consideration for the CSOL. In ideal circumstances travel businesses would generally prefer to support local jobs before turning to overseas workers, including through supporting traineeships. However, skills shortages are significant within Australia, future demand is high, and the future pipeline of skilled workers remains limited. Given this, ATIA supports the occupation of Travel Consultant being on the CSOL.

ATIA's [submission](#) to Jobs and Skills Australia in relation to the Skills Priority List sets out data and evidence in relation to shortages, current demand and future demand, including results from ATIA's Skills and Workforce Survey. In terms of the future pipeline of skilled workers, unfortunately enrolments in traineeships such as Certificate III in Travel fell by over 80 per cent during the period of COVID restrictions as the travel industry was one of the industries that was most impacted by the pandemic and the Government responses to the threat of COVID-19. The latest available data shows an improvement compared to the previous year, however it remains low.

In terms of the requirement for guaranteed annual earnings to be at least \$70,000 for an occupation to be on the CSOL, ATIA's analysis based on member consultations and discussions with travel specific recruitment agencies indicate that corporate travel consultants in particular have a base salary of at least \$70,000. In relation to leisure/retail travel consultants, there are a range salary levels, many of which have a base salary of above \$70,000 (plus commission / incentives). We understand Government will also have data on average annual salaries. In considering this, it is important to note that data on average wages during 2019-2022 were at a time when the travel sector, and the hours worked by travel professionals (which in turn impacts the annual take home pay), were impacted greatly by COVID restrictions and will therefore not be reflective of 2024 rates.

Long-term employment outcomes for visa holders is a difficult criterion to comment on, given that Travel Consultants are not currently on the skilled migration lists. In terms of the impact on employment outcomes for Australians, given the amount of vacancies and the future demand for travel consultants, it would be extremely unlikely that the addition of Travel Consultants to the CSOL would displace domestic workers.

In terms of comparable skills, many of the skills relating to customer service, booking systems and destination knowledge are universal and therefore transferrable. Feedback from members indicates that some local travel consultants have had experience working overseas, and this has been helpful for their career in Australia. In terms of corporate travel, interactions are generally transactional and process driven, and overseas experience would easily line up with the requirements of the job in Australia. In relation to leisure travel, feedback is that overseas travel consultants are very familiar with the destinations Australia sells, and also have experience not as easily found in Australia. For example, luxury travel is a much bigger

market in the United Kingdom than it is in Australia so it would be very beneficial to have workers with significant experience in this style of travel to be permitted to work in Australia.

Travel Agency Managers (ANZSCO Code 142116)

Similar comments apply in relation to Travel Agency Managers, and this occupation also featured in ATIA's [submission](#) to the Skills Priority List. The average annual salary for Travel Agency Managers is above \$70,000.

Tour Guides (ANZSCO Code 451412)

Tour Guides are also not currently eligible for skilled migration to Australia, however they are under consideration for the CSOL. ATIA supports the occupation of Tour Guide being on the CSOL. Within this occupation, note that industry distinguishes between Tour Guide roles and Driver Guide roles, which include the requirement for qualifications to drive coaches in addition to undertaking tour guiding duties.

There is a consistent and significant challenge in recruiting and retaining qualified tour guides, especially with qualifications to also drive coaches while undertaking tour duties (i.e. driver guides), which is a critical role for the successful operation of tour operator businesses within the Australian market.

Despite continuous efforts to recruit locally, including varied and creative recruitment initiatives and investing a considerable amount of time and money into targeted marketing and recruitment campaigns for tour guiding roles across Australia, travel businesses often fall short of the required number of tour guides and driver guides. The vacancy rate remains high, with positions often remaining unfilled for several months. Even with enhanced advertising efforts they do not receive an adequate number of applications to cover operational requirements. The candidates they do receive often lack the necessary skills and qualifications specific to the tour guiding profession.

Tour operators have implemented various creative solutions to recruit and upskill local talent, including training programs and partnerships with local vocational institutions, however these have unfortunately not bridged the talent gap, and large shortages remain.

In terms of the requirement for guaranteed annual earnings to be at least \$70,000 for an occupation to be on the CSOL, ATIA's analysis based on member consultations is that this would be met by Tour Driver Guide roles. In considering any data Government has on average salaries, we again point out that any data on average wages during 2019-2022 were at a time when the travel sector, and the hours worked by travel professionals (which in turn impacts the annual take home pay), were impacted greatly by COVID restrictions and will therefore not be reflective of 2024 rates.

In terms of comparable skills, many skills are transferable and in fact language skills from overseas candidates are highly valuable.

Long-term employment outcomes for visa holders is a difficult criterion to comment on, given that Tour Guides are not currently on the skilled migration lists. While working holiday makers are utilized, there are of course caps on the amount of time they can work for an employer and how long they can remain in Australia. In terms of the impact on employment outcomes for Australians, given the ongoing amount of vacancies and the future demand, it would be extremely unlikely that the addition of Tour Guides to the CSOL would displace domestic workers. It would instead alleviate the pressure on the current workforce and enhance the quality and tour services offered, benefiting the overall tourism industry in Australia, especially in regional Australia.

If you would like any further information, please feel free to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Ingrid Fraser
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