



8 February 2024

Department of Home Affairs  
GPO Box 9984  
Sydney NSW 2001

To whom it may concern,

**RE: STANDARD BUSINESS SPONSORSHIP (482, 494) – [REDACTED] [REDACTED]**

We would like to provide further context for our Standard Business Sponsorship Application to support the assessment process.

Since 2020, we have been operating in the Colac-Otway region of Victoria and have undergone significant growth in the last 2-3 years providing much needed tree management and removal services to the local community. As a result, we have grown from employing one casual employee to requiring 3 x permanent employees. We have employed a number of local Australian workers to fill these positions [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and we invested +\$40k in these workers to undertake traineeships (Certificate III in Arboriculture) and acquire licences (truck licence, high risk work licence, traffic control, first aid) to become qualified and undertake tree works in a safe manner.

Despite our significant investment, three of these workers left the business to work in vegetation management for powerlines where they were offered a higher wage from a large overseas company [REDACTED] than what we could offer. Another worker was let go due to poor work performance and another worker left to move to [REDACTED] for personal reasons. As a result, we were left with one skilled worker [REDACTED] which significantly impacted our business operations.

We have always aimed to hire local Australian workers as a priority in our business, however in the last 6 months we were unable to find a suitably qualified or experienced worker to fill our remaining positions. We had one applicant [REDACTED] who was Australian and had experience that we were planning to hire, but a reference check showed a patchy work history and so we were forced to withdraw the employment offer immediately.

We then amended our online job advertisement to find overseas workers who may carry relevant licences or qualifications to increase our candidate pool. We received over 70 applications which was a more than ten-fold increase to our previous advertisements that only targeted Australian workers. All the Australian candidates had almost no relevant experience or qualifications, compared to the overseas candidates of which at least 4-5 applicants had suitable experience or qualifications.



Whilst we are disappointed that we're unable to find any suitable Australians, given the tree industry has a critical shortage of skilled workers (arborist is on the current skill shortage list) and our location in a regional area, we have found that the only avenue to find suitable workers for our business is from overseas.

As a short-term worker (backpacker) is not ideal for our operations given the amount of time required to become familiar with our operations, the only way for us to keep skilled/experienced overseas workers is to become a business sponsor at this current stage.

We hope that you will consider the above in your assessment to understand our current hardship to continue the business without the sponsorship avenue to hire and keep long-term workers. If you require any further evidence on our hiring history, we are happy to provide this.

Yours faithfully,  
***for and on behalf of Colac Trees***

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