

AGENTS OF CHANGE

Using a registered migration agent enabled **Karen Bleakley** to stop worrying about the visa application process...



“OK, let’s go for it,” I told Matt. We had been agonising about whether to migrate to Australia for years.

After being unsure about our future for such a long time, we finally had a plan, and it felt right.

The next day, I looked online to get started. We knew Matt’s occupation was on the skills list so we assumed the hard part was making the decision to go as the visa process sounded straightforward.

Unfortunately, his occupation was removed from the Skilled Occupation List (SOL) the week we decided to migrate. Some research online showed that two states still required his skills via the sponsored route, but they weren’t the states we wanted.

I spent hours ringing migration agents looking for a solution. Some agents recommended waiting to see if any other states had updated their State Migration Plans (SMPs), others told me incorrect information to get me to sign up with

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them and others weren’t helpful at all.

GETTING ADVICE

I eventually found a registered migration agent at Sort Out My Visa (www.sortoutmyvisa.com) who was willing to chat about our options without any commitment.

Finding someone I could talk to with no obligation, who explained everything

in plain English, made such a difference. Between us, we figured out there was a good chance Matt’s skills and qualifications met the requirements for another similar occupation which was on the SOL.

We decided it was worth trying to put in for a skills assessment for this as it would allow us to live anywhere in the country, rather than being tied to a state.

With the guidance of our agent, we pulled together all the paperwork. Our agent reviewed it before deciding she was happy we had enough evidence to be successful. Having her advice and support took all of the worry out of it and we were able to submit our skills assessment with confidence. A few weeks later it was accepted, allowing us to move on to the next phase.

The rest of the process went just as smoothly, with our agent asking for information in advance of each stage so it was ready to be submitted when needed. We were able to stop worrying about the

visa and focus on getting our house ready for sale.

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

Like me, Ruth (who blogs at www.dorkymum.wordpress.com) had a positive experience of using an agent for her migration to Tasmania.

“We moved from the UK to Australia in September 2013 and we used a

Enlisting the help of an agent could give you more time to focus on your move



migration agent to help secure the 457 visa that we are here on. Our agent at Dobson Mitchell Allport Lawyers made the process so simple.

“We didn’t have to spend hours on the phone or trawling websites to ensure that we were providing the correct information, we just followed our agent’s instructions one email at a time, and he collated all the supporting evidence that we provided, as well as liaising with my husband’s new employers.

“It was reassuring having a single point of contact, and our agent was someone we felt comfortable asking questions of. We had been told to expect a wait of up to 10 weeks before a decision was reached on our visa, so we were delighted when it ended up taking just five days!

“I would recommend using a migration agent if you are thinking about making such a big move. We also used a relocation agent, Jo Reardon at Settled In.”

GOING IT ALONE

On the flip side, our friends Garry and Sarah did all of the paperwork themselves

for their move to Brisbane. “When we decided to emigrate, after looking through what was involved on the Australian Immigration website, we chose to not go through an agent as our application seemed straightforward,” says Garry. “My wife’s trade was on the most-wanted list, there were no custody problems with the kids and we had no criminal records or health problems.

“The forms were easy to follow and if there was anything we were stuck on, the ‘help’ section normally had the answers. A couple of times I asked questions in the migration forums, but this was minimal.

“Arranging the police checks, the medicals and sending my wife’s qualifications away for verification was very easy. All addresses required were provided on the website.

“I think people worry that they will get it wrong and have to start from the beginning again – this is not the case. I

emailed through the wrong birth certificates for my wife and I (the smaller ones but the full certificates were required). Once I received these through the post it took less than a day for them to be verified.

“The whole process took less than four months from the time we first began on the forms to the day our status on the website changed from ‘pending’ to ‘granted’.

“If you’re thinking of emigrating, I would recommend saving some money and doing it yourself. It’s easier than it looks, and you know where you are in the process at all times – there’s no waiting for a middle man to get back to you.”

Should you use a migration agent? I’m afraid I can’t answer that. What I do know is you shouldn’t take too long making that decision because you might find your skill drops off the SOL while you dither! 🇺🇸



■ Karen is a freelance travel writer and blogger. You can read about her migration journey on her family, travel and lifestyle blog at www.talesofatwinmum.com or on Twitter @TalesofaTwinMum.