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6 March 2008

Senator Chris Evans
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship
MG68
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senator Evans

Government 2008-2009 Migration Program Consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the consultative process held by the Government in respect to its 2008-2009 migration program considerations.

As I indicated to you at the consultative meeting in Melbourne on 6 February 2008, AMMA has prepared a submission outlining key migration issues relevant to the resources sector. (A copy of our submission is Attachment 1.)

In brief, AMMA continues to support the 457 Skilled Migration Programme. Having stated this, it is evident from the overwhelming response from our members that improvements are overdue. AMMA believes that the following actions are urgently needed:

- The urgent implementation of Priority Processing for 457 visa nominations for sponsors with a demonstrated proven track record of compliance with all 457 obligations.
- A new **Short-Term Temporary** visa category with less onerous requirements than a 457 temporary skilled visa that will enable employers to sponsor specialist workers for short-term work contracts of up to 12 months.

This category may be processed and applied for in a similar fashion to the 459 visa where the onus is placed on the sponsoring employer as opposed to the overseas applicant.

- An improvement in standard 457 visa processing times to four weeks from the current 12 weeks plus, that currently exists. This would be assisted by introducing the Priority Processing above, but would also be assisted by additional resources in DIAC.



- The current x-ray clearance process also contributes to unnecessary processing delays and should be reviewed.
- Improved communications with DIAC staff. Case officers to be given ownership of case files, to enable employer sponsors to readily contact case officers to ascertain the progress of their sponsorship application and the reason for any delays.
- Improvement in Labour Agreement processing times. Labour Agreements should not be used to leverage more restrictive requirements beyond those generally required of standard business sponsorships. The existing delays of up to and in excess of two years are occurring without any justification.
- The introduction of a stage by stage online tracking system for all skilled visa lodgements.
- The inclusion of general construction workers (semi skilled) such as riggers and scaffolders in the list of occupations permitted for temporary work visas to address employer skills needs. Also issues associated with classification and skill recognition are in need of urgent review. The resources sector will require an additional 70,000 employees by 2015, 70 percent of which will be trades people and semi skilled workers.
- AMMA accepts that a minimum salary threshold for 457 visa holders is appropriate but the salary definition should not exclude regular penalty payments, bonuses, allowances and so forth that are a common feature of resource sector operations.
- AMMA continues to support the DIAC outreach officer programme for the resources sector.

Forwarded for consideration and further consultation purposes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Knott', written in a cursive style.

Steve Knott
Chief Executive

Note: For reference purposes AMMA's Senior Legal Advisor, Geoff Bull is AMMA's operational contact on migration matters. He can be contacted on (08) 9221 5444.