

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 19 July, 2011

Resource industry employers' migration issues to be aired

The concerns of resource industry employers over access to the skilled migration scheme will be put to both sides of politics at an industry forum in Perth later today.

Immigration Minister, Chris Bowen, and Shadow Minister, Scott Morrison, will both attend the inaugural Migration Conference held by resource industry employer group, AMMA.

AMMA Chief Executive, Steve Knott, said resource industry employers were keen to not only listen to what both sides of politics had to offer, but also present their own perspectives on what could be done to improve and enhance the current system.

"AMMA welcomed the Federal Government's recent announcement to introduce Enterprise Migration Agreements, which for large resource projects will provide streamlined access to skilled migrants, pre-qualifying employers for sponsorship and reducing agreement negotiating timeframes," Mr Knott said.

"Despite resistance from some quarters of the union movement, who will also be addressing resource employers at our conference today, AMMA believes accessing experienced professional, skilled and semi-skilled labour from overseas is a necessary adjunct to training Australian workers and sourcing workers locally."

Mr Knott said he expected delegates at the conference would use it as an opportunity to raise a number of reforms to the current skilled migration scheme, including:

- reducing the onerous nature of the English language proficiency testing;
- reducing the \$2 billion threshold applying to EMAs to allow a greater number of resource industry employers to access the scheme; and
- revising the current 457 working visa arrangements.

"On the issue of English language testing, in November 2010, 38 per cent of AMMA members said the increased English language testing requirements had made recruiting skilled labour from overseas more difficult," Mr Knott said.

"In addition to this, a recent survey of AMMA members indicated over 74 per cent of resource industry employers would be looking to source workers from overseas in the next 12 months to address current projected labour shortages.

"Clearly, with such high levels of demand anticipated, it is in the interest of all parties concerned to ensure we have a responsive and efficient visa processing system which meets the needs of employers, departmental officials and other stakeholders."

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