

MEDIA ALERT

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Economy wins in 457 Visa sponsorship reforms

A significant revision to the 457 Visa program is a major win for Australian workplaces, with businesses granted more efficiencies around the sponsored skilled migration scheme including faster processing times, according to resource industry employer group AMMA.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) this week announced the revisions to its sponsorship accreditation criteria will apply from November 7, and means employers no longer have to include sponsored skilled migrants in Fair Work Australia collective agreements.

After raising the resource industry's concerns to DIAC in October, AMMA migration services director Geoff Bull said this week's announcement is welcome news to employers in every Australian sector.

"The efficiencies that have been created by DIAC will see the sponsored migration program become an invaluable tool for easing the skills shortage on resource employers," Mr Bull said.

"As many billions of dollars worth of resource projects come online in the next few years, skilled migrants will play an essential role in Australia realising the full economic potential of this investment. In particular, employers will be able to efficiently source overseas professionals to fill the number of highly-skilled roles that cannot be met with local demand.

"The resource industry doesn't view skilled migrants as a long-term alternative to Australian workers. In fact, industry stakeholders and various governments are working to implement training and policy initiatives to build the long-term sustainability of Australia's resources workforce. But employers now have more effective short-term solutions until this can be achieved."

One of AMMA's primary concerns raised in its October submission was the mandatory requirement that a company must: "Have a valid collective or enterprise agreement that will cover all sponsored subclass 457 visa holders earning less than AUD\$180,000."

Mr Bull highlighted this appeared to be in breach of the existing Commonwealth legislation regarding unlawful discrimination against employers due to the non-use of an industrial instrument.

"Both the Fair Work Act 2009 and the Building and Construction Industry Improvement Act 2005 contain anti-discriminatory provisions in regard to the non-use of enterprise agreements by employers," he said.

"Furthermore, AMMA argued the salary threshold of \$180,000 was too high, given this would cover both senior management in many SMEs and professionals who are traditionally not employed on collective enterprise agreements.

"DIAC has removed both requirements from its new list of criteria, which we support and feel is far more workable for not only resource employers, but businesses in every sector of the Australian economy."

AMMA Director Geoff Bull is available for media interviews and is also a keynote speaker at the AMMA West Coast Conference, held on Wednesday November 9 in Perth.

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