

Skilled migration reforms welcomed by resource industry

AUSTRALIA's resource industry has welcomed today's reforms to the permanent employer-sponsored visa program that provide a simplified pathway for temporary 457 visa holders to gain permanent Australian residence.

The reforms take effect from July 2012 and include collapsing six visa subclasses into two, providing more appropriate English language requirements and raising the upper age limit to 50 years.

According to AMMA director Minna Knight, the changes allow employers in Australia's burgeoning resource industry to retain those skilled migrants that have made a valuable contribution to Australian projects and are dedicated to their long-term futures in the country.

"Skilled migrants play an essential role in allowing employers to fill critical skills gaps that at this stage are unable to be solved by local supply. Migration is an essential workforce strategy, particularly in the short to medium term, while Australia's workforce is evolving to meet this unprecedented skills demand front-on," Ms Knight says.

"Some of these highly skilled professionals have specifically been brought into Australia to pass on their international experience and help up-skill the local workforce for these new and exciting resources opportunities.

"To put the numbers into perspective, just 3650 temporary visa applications in mining were granted in financial year 2011, while the industry is bracing itself for a peak demand of 83,000 new jobs across resources-related construction activity by 2013 alone.

"The overwhelming majority of these jobs will be filled by Australian workers and many employers are utilising highly skilled migrants to train and pass on their skills to local employees. Today's reforms facilitate this by simplifying the process of retaining some of these visa holders in longer-term positions.

"The industry is now one step closer to ensuring we have the right level of skilled professionals to cover the immediate labour demand and continue assisting Australians in their take-up of these new job opportunities into the near future."

Ms Knight also commended the decision to raise the age limit for applicants to 50 years, which he says 'is an acknowledgement of the significant value experienced and mature workers from any nationally have to all employers in today's age'.

AMMA provides migration advice and consultancy services to some of Australia's largest resource employers, providing the national association with unique insight into migration policy matters.

For all media requests including interviews and photographs

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