

## Resource industry urges cautious approach to 457 Visa reforms

*Australian Mines and Metals Association (AMMA) chief executive Steve Knott urges a cautious approach to making any changes to Australia's 457 Visa skilled migration scheme:*

AUSTRALIA has a long and proud history of working with skilled migrants to contribute to the nation's economic development and to expand job opportunities for Australians.

Periods of heightened investment have also historically provided great opportunities for skilled people to migrate to our country and become permanent Australian citizens, often after initial work as temporary skilled migrants.

Overseas migration remains an important part of our nation-building but is certainly not a cheap or a low cost alternative to hiring Australians, in fact costing up to \$60,000 more per person in the resource industry.

Overseas skilled migration plays a small but critically important part in our contemporary resource industry, and in successfully bringing online major projects offering thousands of job opportunities throughout the community.

With \$650 billion worth of resource projects proposed for our country, it is an absolutely fact that our industry cannot source all the skilled people it needs domestically. The government's National Resources Sector Employment Taskforce (NRSET) found this quite clearly.

While more than 92 per cent of new mining jobs are filled by Australian people, skilled migration remains a very small, but very important part of our country's resource investment opportunity.

These projects go on to create many thousands of local Australian jobs, as highlighted last week by a Reserve Bank discussion paper which showed the resource industry has indirectly created up to 1.1 million Australian jobs through flow-on effects in our economy.

The resource industry will await further details regarding Minister O'Connor's announcement. It is vitally important however that accessing skilled migration programs does not become more costly and complex, or delay projects that create much needed jobs for thousands of Australians.

Everyone involved in policy and debate on this issue needs to have access to the full facts, including the importance of accessing overseas skills in industries facing skills shortages.

The carefully concocted position advanced by the CFMEU does not provide a sound foundation for effective, balanced and objective policies in this area.

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