

Government pandering to unions on 457 Visas will lose not create jobs

RESOURCE industry employer group, AMMA, has warned the federal government's indulgence in a "deceptive and profoundly unprincipled" union anti-skilled migration campaign is putting Australian projects and jobs at risk.

AMMA (Australian Mines and Metals Association) says the government's continued attack on critical 457 Visa arrangements, including the Prime Minister's address to today's ACTU Conference, shows it continues to pander to trade union bosses at the expense of the national well-being.

"This deceptive anti-skilled migration campaign has been full of rhetoric and lacking evidence. It must stop before our government spooks investors into taking their capital and all the jobs that come with it, to other global markets," says AMMA chief executive Steve Knott.

"Effective governance would mean finding those very few employers who break the law and prosecuting them, not making unnecessary changes to an effective and responsible system.

"The government continues to insult the Australian public's intelligence and our nation's proud history of skilled migration by using this campaign as a smoke screen for failed asylum seeker policy and union pandering."

AMMA has also expressed concerns about recommendations in the Senate Majority Report into the Greens' *Protecting Local Jobs* Bill, particularly the suggestion that employers seeking access to the 457 Scheme may be forced to use a government and union-run jobs board.

"The government appears to believe that alongside the ACTU and other union groups, they are better qualified to run the recruitment practices of Australian private industry than the employers themselves," Mr Knott says.

"This is staggering given most of those involved in this discourse have had limited to no experience in running private sector businesses, let alone multi-billion dollar mega resource sector projects.

"The resource industry has done its heavy lifting in creating Australian jobs and contributing a major component to today's steady 5.4% unemployment rate. This can continue if the government reconsiders its move to impose more costly red-tape and union interference on employers."

Mr Knott says the resource industry is a perfect example of how small levels of skilled migrants contribute to nation-defining projects and help create thousands of long-term Australian jobs.

"Resource industry jobs have grown at 20% annually for the last five years, yet our annual intake of skilled migrants has declined and today represents just 1% of the total workforce," he says.

"\$650 billion of major resources projects are slated for Australia between now and 2018, of which more than half have not reached final investment approval. The Reserve Bank has recently highlighted the multiplier flow-on benefits into jobs in other areas of the Australian economy.

"The 457 Visa Scheme is a responsible policy that allows highly skilled temporary migrant workers to fill critical shortages during peak construction demand. They are sponsored for a particular project, must obtain medical insurance, pay taxes and contribute significantly to Australia's economic well-being."

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