

Training and 457 Visas in the mining industry: Let's look at the facts

WITH the CFMEU trotting out another misleading campaign, national resource industry employer group AMMA is confident the Australian public will consider the real facts when it comes to training, apprenticeships and skilled migration in the mining industry.

"Far more Australian people are being trained to work in the mining industry than there are temporary skilled migrants on 457 Visas," says AMMA executive director, Scott Barklamb.

"457 Visa holders have consistently comprised just 2.5% to 3.5% of the resource sector workforce over the past five years. Currently, our industry employs more than 11,000 apprentices and trainees, representing 5% of our direct workforce."

Recent work by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) shows that the mining industry spends around 5.5% of payroll on training, well above government benchmarks such as the 1% training benchmark required to hire 457 Visa workers. A total \$1.147 billion was spent by the mining industry on training in 2011-12.

Growth in the number of apprentices and trainees in the mining industry almost quadrupled between 2003 and 2011.

Official Immigration Department figures also clearly show that the mining industry's usage of 457 Visas has declined by 20% in the past 12 months.

The consistently low usage of 457 Visa holders, during a period in which the resource sector workforce grew rapidly, indicates:

- Training for Australians in the resource industry has kept pace with rapid workforce growth;
- More than 96% of the workforce are locals (consistent over the past five years); and
- The resource industry employs skilled migrants to supplement, not substitute, local employees.

"Both employers and unions want to maximise opportunities for Australian residents in resource employment, and increase the level of skills and mobility in Australia's workforce," Mr Barklamb says.

"However the CFMEU should acknowledge the facts on what our industry already does and engage more positively with employers, rather than spend its members' funds on misleading and divisive media campaigns.

"Tony Maher's comments today about training and skilled migration in the mining industry are very disappointing, given our sector spends significantly more on training and apprenticeships than the national average, and has reduced its usage of 457 Visas by 20%."

AMMA (Australian Mines and Metals Association) yesterday addressed a Senate Committee hearing on the 457 Visa program. The national resource industry employer group called for a 'more mature and considered debate' on the value and usage of 457 Visas, given the impact of the 'misleading and disappointing' union-driven campaign.

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