

## **Business concerns and Australia's global reputation ignored in 457 Visa changes**

*Statement from Steve Knott, Chief Executive, Australian Mines and Metals Association (AMMA)*

It is beyond disappointing that legislation for unnecessary costs and regulatory burden for the 457 Visa program has today been introduced to parliament with no consultation with industry representatives and no consideration for the wider impacts this is having on Australia's international business reputation.

Many industry stakeholders, including the resource industry employers' group AMMA previously told the Senate Committee that any misuse of the 457 Visa scheme was extremely limited, and that these isolated instances should be dealt with under the existing range of investigation and prosecution processes.

AMMA had consistently told the government we were very willing to participate in mature, considered and fact-based conversations about how to fix any loose planks in the system. The Prime Minister however seems intent on ripping up the floorboards.

The world is watching how Australia is handling this anti-foreign worker political campaign and it is playing out for us very badly in the international business community.

There are many times the numbers of Australian expats working overseas than there are people working in Australia on 457 Visas. We need to question whether the ALP is opening the door for other nations to follow its lead and close the opportunities for Australian people to work and gain experience overseas.

Just 10 months ago, the bipartisan support for the 457 Visa program was demonstrated when former Immigration Minister Chris Bowen [told an](#) AMMA Conference:

*"The 457 visa program has proved to be highly responsive to labour market conditions. The 457 visa program and the other steps I've outlined today are well-targeted and responsive measures to help meet Australia's economic needs while continuing to ensure opportunities aren't diminished for Australian workers."* (Hon Chris Bowen, August 2, 2012).

Former Minister Bowen's comments reflect that just 10 months ago and indeed, right up to this federal election year, there was strong bipartisan support for what was jointly recognised as a responsible and efficient skilled migration program.

This whole tainted process smacks of political desperation as the ALP ignores serious business concerns to deliver more favours for its union mates and deflect attention from the 700<sup>th</sup> asylum seeker boat arrival last the weekend.

The Gillard Government needs to begin to accord the Australian community more respect, stop insulting the public's intelligence, and stop demonising 457 workers and their employers.

**MEDIA ENQUIRIES:** Contact AMMA media adviser Tom Reid on 0419 153 407