

Minister O'Connor: Industry submits its evidence on 457 visas, where is yours?

AFTER lodging its [submission to the Senate inquiry](#) on the government's changes to the 457 visa program, resource industry employer group AMMA is challenging Immigration Minister Brendan O'Connor to put forth any credible evidence that our system requires a drastic, union-driven overhaul.

Consistent with the growing body of evidence from industry and independent migration bodies, AMMA's submission outlines why the government's *Migration Amendment (Temporary Sponsored Visas) Bill 2013* is radical, regressive and represents a dangerous move towards a smaller, less globally engaged Australia.

"The Senate must reject this bill. It is based solely on union-sponsored political campaigns against skilled migration, with no evidence to support these regressive changes," says AMMA chief executive Steve Knott.

"At the behest of its union backers the government is clearly attempting to undermine the capacity of employers to fill identified skills gaps in a timely and operationally essential manner. This undercuts the very policy rationale of the 457 visa scheme.

"It is telling that the government today introduced a motion to provide this bill just 15 minutes of debate in the Senate program next week, despite this issue being of clear national significance. Clearly the government has something to hide behind this guillotine motion."

In both its submission to the Senate and previous direct correspondence with Minister O'Connor, AMMA details particular concerns about plans to reintroduce labour marketing testing (LMT).

"Labour market testing was abandoned more than a decade ago due to being costly, ineffective and vastly inferior to today's system. Nothing has occurred that should send us backwards on this issue," Mr Knott says.

"By going down this road the government is ignoring concerns raised in the 2008 Deegan Review that this would compromise Australia's international trade obligations.

"It also ignores the fact that employers already face a high regulatory bar to access skilled migrants and mechanism that render LMT and its onerous requirements absolutely unnecessary.

"Training benchmarks must be met, market rates and conditions provided, sponsorship costs incurred, relevant qualifications demonstrated and compliance records kept.

"It costs typically \$15,000 but often up to \$60,000, according to independent ECU research commissioned by AMMA, to hire a skilled migrant. Put simply, this is not a cheap or easy option and comes with significant time delays.

"Given the small but critical role played by temporary skilled migrants to the resource industry, this bill threatens to contribute to the further delay or cancellation of essential job creating resource investments in Australia.

"We call on our parliament to reject this bill."

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