

MEDIA RELEASE

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457 Visa improvements to support local jobs and growth, says resource industry

AUSTRALIA'S resource industry employer group, AMMA, welcomes Minister for Immigration Scott Morrison today flagging the government's support for removing cumbersome and unnecessary bureaucracy from Australia's valuable skilled migration programs.

"The resource industry's use of skilled migration has declined in recent years, but where we do employ international specialists, their expertise and skills are often critical to safety, performance and supporting a large number of aligned Australian jobs," says Steve Knott, AMMA chief executive.

"It is encouraging to have our Immigration Minister publicly acknowledge how skilled migration supports both economic growth and employment opportunities for the Australian workforce, after an unfortunate politicisation of the skilled migration debate under the previous government.

"The minister also reaffirmed what employer groups like AMMA have long maintained, which is that misuse of the 457 Visa system is isolated and there has certainly been no widespread rorting."

Speaking at the National Press Club, Minister Morrison also voiced the government's early support for some changes to the 457 Visa program recommended by its 457 Visa Integrity Review Panel.

Changes such as new processes to speed up skilled migration Labour Agreements for Australian businesses are in-line with AMMA's recommendations to the Panel.

"We have seen major resource industry projects wait up to four years to secure a Labour Agreement to cover a small number of valuable and necessary international workers. The current negotiating process is extremely difficult and time-consuming," Mr Knott says.

"This has a very real impact on job opportunities for Australians. Skilled overseas workers have never been used to replace Australian jobs, rather they complement the skills available here with new global expertise and support projects delivering great value to Australia's economy.

"Skilled migrants support short-to-medium term skills shortages when Australians are unable to fill such roles. They pay tax from day one, and create local jobs.

"In 2013, the Reserve Bank estimated our industry directly and indirectly accounted for 1.1 million jobs in Australia. With 457 Visa applications in 2013 numbering just 1,340, skilled migration clearly provides a small, but important contribution to our industry's wider employment opportunities."

Other proposed changes include more practical and effective standards for English language testing to fix an array of existing problems. AMMA also supports the proposed reduction in market salary rate comparisons from \$250,000 to \$180,000 per annum.

"Clearly employers should not be burdened with onerous salary comparison requirements for high income earners being paid more than \$180,000 per year," Mr Knott says.

Despite a recommendation from the Review Panel, the Minister indicated the government did not support the complete removal of Labour Market Testing measures. With Edith Cowen University research showing it can cost employers up to \$70,000 to sponsor a 457 Visa holder, AMMA has long argued such measures are completely unnecessary and cumbersome.

AMMA is next week (Tuesday 16th September) hosting its [2014 Skilled Migration Conference](#) in the Perth CBD. This is a practitioner-based event open to resource employers and pre-registered media.

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