

MEDIA RELEASE

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Skilled migration must stop being fodder for cheap politics

*AMMA – Australia's resource industry employer group
Statement by Tara Diamond, Acting Chief Executive*

RESOURCE industry employers welcome any Australian Government moving to ensure our nation's skilled migration systems are fit for our current economic circumstances and have the full confidence of the Australian public.

In this context, today's replacement of the 457 Visa program with a new temporary immigration program will help ensure skilled migrants, and the significant contribution they make to our nation, is no longer trivialised and leveraged for cheap political point-scoring.

However, it should be recognised that the 457 Visa program has worked as intended. The system was built to be responsive to changes in our economy and fluctuating labour demand, and has delivered on this objective.

The resource industry is one sector that has seen a dramatic change in labour demand and skills availability in recent years.

The same temporary skilled migration programs that were critical to filling crippling skills shortages during the major project investment and construction boom, have more recently seen numbers drop to almost non-existent, as skills and labour pressures have eased.

Department of Immigration figures show the resource industry as making 6,630 applications for 457 visas in 2011-12, falling to 2,600 in 2013-14 and just 230 in 2016-17.

Clearly, any groups characterising the 457 Visa program as detracting from Australian job opportunities have been misinformed at best, and acting mischievously at worse.

If today's announcement is at all effective at silencing the cheap politics and scaremongering that has taken place around temporary skilled migration in recent years, AMMA would welcome that outcome.

But overhauling a responsible skilled immigration policy that has proven highly responsive to labour demand and supported nation-building projects, is hardly the type of 'big picture' policy thinking that will address Australia's pressing employment and economic challenges.

The government's attention would be better directed at tackling Australia's job-killing workplace relations system which, unlike 457 visas, has proven to be a major barrier to competitiveness and employment growth.

[Learn more](#) about the resource industry's campaign for workplace relations change.

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