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## Resource industry employers seek facts on “big Australia” debate

Noted demographer and social commentator, Bernard Salt, shall be addressing a meeting of resource industry employers on the Gold Coast later this week to discuss the issue of “a big Australia”.

Mr Salt's analysis follows hot on the heels of the Federal Government's recent Budget announcement of a significant increase in Australia's skilled migration intake coupled with the release of its Sustainable Population Strategy.

AMMA Director of Migration Services, Geoff Bull, said he welcomed debate and discussion of the relative merits and pitfalls of the Government's skilled migration strategy given the resource industry had successfully appeared to pressure the Government into increasing the skilled migration intake.

“The increase in the level of skilled migration places to 125,850 over the coming financial year is a welcome “first-step” in addressing the skills gap facing resource industry employers across the nation,” Mr Bull said.

“It is AMMA's strong belief an objective analysis of the facts and figures surrounding the skills shortage in Australia shows the increase is desperately needed.

“As the situation stands, even with the proposed increase in migrants under 457 visas and Enterprise Migration Agreements (EMAs) - we are potentially cutting it fine in terms of being able to meet overall industry demand.

“The “second steps” required of Government is to ensure consistency in the delivery of application processing times, and the commitment to an ongoing process of ensuring both the English language proficiency test thresholds and EMA project value thresholds are delivering necessary outcomes in the real world.”

Mr Bull said since the migration initiatives had been announced, certain political and union figures have attempted to argue against the increase in Australia's skilled migration intake.

“Regrettably, in doing so they have portrayed hard working migrants who want to come to Australia to work for a short period before returning home as ‘queue jumpers’.

“What such alarmists fail to point out is Australia's overall immigration intake will only move to around 185,000 in total - a drop in the overall migration level when compared to the 315,000 brought in the year to December 2008.

“Whilst I appreciate it is hard to stop political point scoring surrounding the migration issue - AMMA is pleased to have Mr Salt give his expert views on what our policy settings mean for the Australian workforce, Australian communities and the broader Australian economy,” Mr Bull said.

ENDS

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