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MORE DETAILS REQUIRED FOR 457 VISA CHANGES

The Migration Institute of Australia (MIA) today cautiously welcomed government changes to the 457 visa program insofar as they protect Australian jobs and overseas worker's conditions, but is concerned about the details of the changes. The MIA urges the government not to lose sight of the value these temporary visa holders bring to the Australian economy and to addressing skills shortages in regional areas.

The introduction of a market based minimum salary and formal skills assessment, while welcomed, needs further details and a framework as to how it will be implemented.

The requirement for employers to show a commitment to employing local labour where available is too vague. Like the plan to develop training benchmarks, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship is faced with the challenge of recognising the differing employment realities across industries and regions.

CEO Maurene Horder says, "It's unlikely that DIAC Case Officers would know the exact situation of a Werribee employer trying to hire a welder, or the difficulties a Dubbo restaurant has in hiring a cook."

The changes introduce a great deal of uncertainty to people currently employed under the 457 visa and to employers who are satisfied with workers employed under the scheme. The government has not announced a date as to when increases in the minimum language requirement comes into force.

"Overseas workers whose 457 visas were issued prior to these new changes, and who don't have high-level English skills, may be forced to leave jobs which they have been performing satisfactorily. As a result, employers would be burdened with finding new workers in areas where skills shortages are still a problem." says Maurene Horder.

The MIA urges the Government to keep regional concessions for employers of 457 visa holders to maintain a strong regional economy when they consider further changes.

For further information contact -

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About MIA - *The Migration Institute of Australia is the professional association for Australian migration service providers worldwide. It represents registered migration agents who provide services to families, businesses and industries.*