



**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Nation-building Needs Migrants (Budget response)**

The Migration Institute of Australia (MIA) welcomes the Government's compassionate approach to the 2009-10 Migration Program in increasing the humanitarian and family components, but notes that there may be a disconnect between the Government's nation-building focus and the proposed skilled migration targets.

The MIA congratulates the Government for increasing the number of family reunion places, for committing to speedily resolve people's immigration status and for redeveloping Villawood Immigration Detention Centre. The MIA also supports any effective long-term migration reform and the implementation of a planning framework.

The MIA recognises that immigration can be a significant part of any government's strategy to meet economic challenges and notes that nation-building strategies have always relied on significant migration. The Treasurer's focus on "the biggest investment in infrastructure since the Snowy Mountains Scheme" points to an example of overseas workers stepping in when required, albeit with poor English language skills.

However, it may be difficult to reconcile the government's emphasis on infrastructure projects with the Program's expectations that fewer trades-level occupations will be granted a visa in 2009-10.

The MIA awaits with great interest to see how the Government proposes to administer the new job-readiness criteria for trade occupations. It is important that any test is flexible, effective and appropriate in achieving the desired outcome. Maurene Horder, CEO of the Migration Institute of Australia says, "It's hard to imagine a one-size-fits-all assessment system of employability."

While the MIA supports the employer and government-sponsored migration pathways, it expects that the shift away from the onshore independent skilled pathway is likely to result in disappointed overseas students who are currently studying in Australia. The unintended but highly damaging effect is that some prospective students may look twice before studying in Australia, potentially hampering the Government's intent of supporting the continued growth of the Australian education industry.

The MIA hopes that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's service standards can be maintained, if not improved, despite budget cuts to DIAC staffing.

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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.