



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MIGRATION PROFESSION SAYS “SPEED IT UP”

The Rudd government’s prioritising and fast-tracking of skilled migrant visas for people sponsored by State or Territory governments, or who have certain occupations or who have a guaranteed of a job, is generally welcome news.

However, the ramifications for skilled migration applicants not in those categories is unclear and of concern, says Maurene Horder, CEO of the Migration Institute of Australia.

Ms Horder commended the Minister’s efforts to address the critical skills shortages being experienced.

“Sensible refinements of the program that help meet the community’s needs are something that we are very supportive of,” she said.

“But, we would also like to see inroads into the backlog of skilled migration applications. Tens of thousands of applicants remain in the pipeline. They can expect to wait up to 15 months or longer to be processed.

“We need the government to be responsive in trying to improve all processing times.”

“The country is crying out for people in medicine, engineering, IT, accounts, teaching and construction. Highly skilled people have been sitting in immigration queues for months who can fill these jobs right now. Moving their applications along quickly is laudable, but let’s not leave the rest languishing in limbo.”

This assignment of priorities may mean that the future is very uncertain for good people who have applied in good faith prior to the changes. We are concerned about the impact on these people.

In particular, the future is unclear for students who have spent significant funds and effort to obtain Australian qualifications, in the belief that they could apply successfully to remain here permanently. This may impact on Australian education sector enrolments in future years.

The MIA will do a fuller assessment of the likely ramifications for the many cases already in the system and prepare a detailed response to the Government. Much detail is unknown.

In a statement yesterday, the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans said changes would be effective from 1 January 2009.

For further information contact –

Maurene Horder, CEO, MIA – 02 9279 3140 or 0418 655 203