

From: Hicks, Mary
Sent: Fri 4/06/2010 3:47 PM
To: legcon.sec@aph.gov.au
Subject: ACCI Feedback of Migration Amendment Bill

Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) comments on the Migration Amendment (Visa Capping) Bill 2010

Australian industry needs a demand driven migration system that meets the immediate and longer term skills needs of industry through having an available pool of highly skilled labour able to gain entry to Australia as well as allowing employers to pick the best applicants (i.e.. those with the right skills) through Employer Nominated and Temporary Skilled Migration pathways. It is essential that strong consultative mechanisms that engage key industry stakeholders are in place to ensure a balanced migration intake that meets Australia's skills needs.

ACCI is concerned about the potential of this amended Bill which provides for ministerial discretion in making decisions that could have the effect of depriving industry sectors of skilled workers. ACCI believes that it is not appropriate for this discretion to vest at ministerial level without a prior obligation to consult, as it has the potential to "cap and kill" occupational streams and visa categories. Should this approach be adopted we consider there must be a formalised mechanism put in place which involves first consulting with industry and other stakeholders.

ACCI believes that it is essential that Australia maintains a transparent migration system that can be easily navigated by employers seeking skilled workers and overseas applicants wishing to bring their skills to Australia. A constant shifting of the goal posts will only serve to harm Australia's reputation overseas as a destination that values highly skilled workers and deter some of the best and brightest applicants for skilled migration. The proposed amendments are not the appropriate means through which to address issues relating to the General Skilled Migration (GSM) program.

The Australian government needs to adopt a holistic view in examining the methodology to determine skilled migration intakes and to ensure that we achieve a balanced population policy in which skilled migration is an integral component. The Australian government should continue to carefully and sensitively manage our national migration program, both for its economic and social contribution to the nation and for its role within a wider population policy