

457 Visas have been a key tool in our skilled migration program to assist regional employers address their skills shortages. For the 2 years from 1/7/06 to 30/6/08 the Board certified 104 applications from employers in the Riverina for potential 457 workers. I don't have an indication if all of the 457 visa applicants actually came to the region

but based on the 2007 survey of skilled migrants in the region there is a good chance the majority did obtain employment here and remained, together with their families as major contributors to the regional economy. While the proposed Amendment would seem to impose some more stringent

measures for both employers and visa holders I am not sure that they are

so onerous as to affect the program. The Board's role as a Regional Certifying Body is seen as a key component of our strategy to address skills shortages in the region.

As a migration byline, I am heading off to the UK on Wednesday next to support our C Change Bureau project at two major jobs expos in Manchester and London. We have over 40 skilled positions registered and hope to facilitate the migration of skilled people to Riverina. I am actually representing the NSW Skilled Migration Unit as well.

In summary, we would not like to see any changes to be so onerous as to curtail the strong flow of skilled people to our region. Of course, the dynamics are significant at the moment and if the continuing world financial crisis impacts the need of the Minerals sector for skilled people in the next 10 years or so, this could slow the drain of our own skilled people away from the region and therefore potentially reduce the need to rely so strongly on inward migration.

My personal view is that the resources sector will struggle for a while but then continue with strength.

Cheers
Peter Dale
Executive Officer
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