



**2 April 2012**

**Joint support for promoting and improving US access to Australian temporary skilled work visas**

Our organisations jointly express support for measures to improve access and encourage greater use by US citizens of temporary skilled migration programs to Australia. This would be to our mutual benefit.

In contrast to the surplus of skilled workers in the US, Australia has intensifying skill shortages and comparatively low unemployment. For example, 75 per cent of construction companies recently surveyed in Australia expect they will have major difficulty hiring skilled labour over the next six months.

There are clearly opportunities in Australia for skilled US citizens seeking work. As well, improved access would facilitate the greater engagement by US companies involved in major projects in Australia.

Alongside the US–Australia Free Trade Agreement negotiations, a special E-3 Visa was created specifically to facilitate work in the US by Australian professionals and their families for two years (extendable). While Australia did not provide a similar arrangement in return, existing Australian visa categories such as the 457 temporary skilled visa are readily available to US citizens, their spouses and dependents to work in Australia for up to four years.

However, despite the availability of skilled workers in the US, the need for skilled workers in Australia and the availability of skilled visas for working in Australia, the number of US citizens taking up the opportunity to work in Australia remains relatively low.

Our organisations are committed to jointly promoting the opportunities for skilled US citizens to work in Australia in a number of ways. This will include communications activities such as web based information and linkages between our organisations; promotional activities to raise awareness of the availability of skilled work in Australia and the provision of information on the subject to our members and affiliated associations.

We welcome Ambassador Bleich's intention to insure that returning US veterans are aware of the opportunities offered by this new initiative and will support his efforts in this regard.

We welcome complementary measures from the Australian government to boost US participation in Australian skilled migration programs including through a commitment to facilitate the processing of fully-documented offshore visa applications made in the US and promotional activities in the US highlighting skills in demand in Australia.

There is a real potential for skilled US workers to temporarily fill skills gaps in Australia to the benefit of the individuals concerned, our membership and our economies.

We are part of the global economy, and our common language, comparable skill levels and close and friendly relations should lead to a greater transfer of skilled workers between our countries. This would be a highly desirable outcome in all our interests.



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