

457 RULES HAMPER INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Consult Australia has warned that the country's infrastructure design industry will struggle to deliver the Government's vision for Australia's future unless changes are made to the 457 visa program.

Consult Australia's CEO, Megan Motto said that the current singling out of employers of engineers in the 457 visa program will hamper the industry's ability to ramp up for future work.

"Recently-introduced Labour Market Testing (LMT) requirements that specifically target employers of engineers—but no other professionals—add administrative burdens to an industry that is already struggling, partly due to the high cost of doing business," said Ms Motto.

"Consult Australia remains extremely concerned by the impact that specific reference to engineering will have on the speed and efficiency of public and private infrastructure development.

"The engineering workforce suffers from chronic workforce supply issues and is susceptible to fluctuations in demand. The 457 visa was intended as a means for filling positions that are in high demand and hard to fill—yet recent reforms have made doing that exponentially harder.

"Robust skilled migration programs are essential to the health of engineering-based companies and the Australian economy as a whole."

The Association submitted data through the industry consultation process that occurred prior to the 2013 amendments to the Act to demonstrate the industry's compliance with the visa program.

"Consult Australia has demonstrated time-and-again that employers of professional engineers are not the cause of concerns for abuse of the 457 visa program," said Ms Motto.

"The Association, and indeed our member firms, are at a loss to understand or explain why they are being treated differently. It provides no practical benefit and only acts to tie a compliant industry in red tape."

Consult Australia's primary recommendation is to remove references to "protected experience" or a "protected qualification" from the *Migration Act 1958* (Cth).

"If this specific reference is removed, employers of engineers will be put on a 'level playing field' with other companies that provide professional services," said Ms Motto.

"The Government must recognise that its infrastructure agenda may falter unless the Australian industry is properly equipped with the skilled workers it needs. In times of great demand efficiently bringing in skilled workers to supplement a domestic shortage is essential.

"Consult Australia urges the Government to see reason and end the nonsense."

Ends

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MEDIA RELEASE



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Editor notes:

- Consult Australia will be providing evidence to the 457 Integrity Review panel in Sydney on Tuesday 29 April.
- Consult Australia's submission can be viewed [here](#).
- Labour Market Testing (LMT) for the subclass 457 visa programme was introduced by the previous Labor Government. Section 140GBC of the Migration Act 1958 (the Act) provides for exemptions to LMT requirements when employers are recruiting to professional roles. This includes positions that require the visa holder to have a bachelors or associate degree or at least three to five years relevant experience. An exception to this exemption is for those with experience as, or qualifications in, engineering (or nursing).

For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact Consult Australia CEO, Megan Motto on 0411 104 458 or via email to megan@consultaaustralia.com.au.

About Consult Australia

Consult Australia is the leading not-for-profit association that represents the business interests of consulting firms operating in the built and natural environment.

Our member firms include: AECOM, Brown Consulting, Golder Associates, Kellogg Brown & Root, Opus International Consultants, Parsons Brinckerhoff, Rider Levett Bucknall, URS Australia and WorleyParsons.

We represent an industry comprising some 48,000 firms across Australia, ranging from sole practitioners through to some of Australia's top 500 firms. Collectively, our industry is estimated to employ over 240,000 people, and generate combined revenue exceeding \$40 billion a year.