

BOOST FOR AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERING INDUSTRY

The nation's engineering skills shortage is set to ease with today's announcement of reforms to the 476 visa estimated to increase the number of overseas graduates eligible to work in Australia by more than 900 per cent.

The 476 visa enables young engineering graduates under 31 years of age, who have completed qualifications at a recognised institution, to live and work in Australia for up to 18 months.

Previously, just 108 institutions were recognised by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC).

Under the new reforms, all universities accredited by Engineers Australia and its partners in the Washington Accord will fall into this category.

This will result in the number of recognised institutions increasing from 16 to 386 in the USA alone.

Industry association, Consult Australia represents the nation's 20 largest engineering firms and was the sole advocator for this reform to visa subclass 476 and has been lobbying for the changes since September 2010.

Chief Executive Officer, Megan Motto said, "By extrapolating the trends for visa holders of Britain, the US, South Africa, Canada and Malaysia, we predict the permanent engineering workforce will be boosted by a minimum of four per cent."

Historically, a significant majority of overseas graduates who enter on 476 visas remain in Australia, converting to permanent General Skilled Migration visas, further bolstering the engineering workforce.

"The reality is that our engineering industry desperately needs graduates to progress through the seniority ranks in Australia to subsidise the shortage of local engineers," said Ms Motto.

The reforms are also expected to have a positive impact across those regional areas which have historically struggled to attract qualified, experienced graduates.

"Regional employers and councils must seize this opportunity to attract overseas graduates into rural areas," said Ms Motto.

"This is a positive step forward for industry, particularly following the significant blow dealt by the recent Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA) reforms."

Ends

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For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact PR & Policy Coordinator, Gillian O'Young on (02) 9922 4711 or via email at gillian@consultaustalia.com.au.