



Suite 206, Level 2,
7 Railway Street
Chatswood NSW 2067
Australia
PO Box 952
Chatswood NSW 2057
T +61 2 9413 9520
F +61 2 8088 1325
E info@eaaa.com.au
www.eaaa.com.au
ABN 35433 559 243

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Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary,

**Submission regarding the effectiveness of the current temporary skilled
visa system in targeting genuine skills shortages**

We are pleased to have the opportunity to provide the attached submission as input to the review of the current temporary skilled visa system.

The Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia (EAAA) is the peak industry Association representing Organisers, Association Organisers, Venues and Suppliers within the exhibition and event sector.

The exhibition and event sector is an important part of Australia's wider business events sector which is an important driver of the Australian economy, contributing to trade and investment, innovation, jobs creation and visitation.

Our members employ people across a diverse range of job roles, ranging from carpenters and other trades, to sales, marketing and business development staff and audio-visual and technical roles. Labour shortages are being experienced across a range of these roles and have been further exacerbated by the changes to the visa system. We therefore thank you for the opportunity to inform this review.

We would be pleased to meet to discuss our submission in greater detail.

Yours sincerely,

Joyce DiMascio
Chief Executive



**SUBMISSION FROM
EXHIBITION AND EVENT ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALASIA (EEAA)
TO SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 About the Exhibition and Events Association of Australasia

The Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia (EEAA) is the peak body representing venues, organisers and suppliers in the exhibition and events sector.

The EEAA promotes the power of exhibitions as a major marketing channel to a variety of external stakeholders including businesses, government and general public.

This is achieved through the delivery of promotional, educational, networking and advocacy programs.

EEAA was established in 1991 and offers a year-round program of services to its members. It is funded by Members and partners through annual membership fees and attendance at EEAA events.

2.0 WHO WE ARE - OUR MEMBERS

The EEAA has 130 member companies who deliver hundreds of exhibitions and events around Australia and also in the Asia-Pacific region. Our members represent venues, exhibition organisers and suppliers servicing the sector.

Our members deliver both business to business (B2B) events as well as business to consumer (B2C) events.

They deliver major consumer and trade events like the Sydney International Boat Show, Fine Food Australia, Good Food and Wine Show, Reed Gift Fair and the Mind Body Spirit Festival and many other trade events across mining, aerospace and maritime, energy and resources, IT, banking and finance and many other sectors.

They represent the biggest clients of the International Convention Centre Sydney, the Sydney Showground, Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre and other convention centres around the country.

Some exhibitions are held in conjunction with major meetings and conferences. Others, mostly in the B2C category, are stand-alone exhibitions and open to the public.

Our Members also deliver major events in which the Australian Government is the major stakeholder eg. Asia-Pacific Economic Forum, Land Forces 2018, G20.

See www.eeaa.com.au for a comprehensive calendar of member events.



3.0 COMMENTS ON THE CURRENT TEMPORARY SKILLED MIGRATION VISA SYSTEM

The EEAA is aware of labour and skills shortages across a number of areas within the exhibition and event industry. Exhibition Organisers in particular find it difficult to source highly skilled staff from within Australia. Roles such as Show Directors, Exhibition Managers and Business Development and Sales experts are particularly problematic. These roles require expert knowledge of the exhibition sector and the concept of selling 'exhibition space'.

There is a very small pool to choose from within Australia for these roles which makes it difficult for Australian events to thrive in a global landscape. If they are not able to get the right skills to grow their events, these events will be lost to other countries.

Other roles including hospitality staff, manual labourers, audio-visual and other technical roles are also experiencing shortages.

Members in all States have expressed difficulties in finding staff including Perth, where significant investment in new hotels and venue infrastructure has led to a struggle to fill the jobs being created.

Western Australia has also experienced a decline in overseas students and visitors on working holiday maker visas which has reduced the pool further. An increase in student hours from 20 hours to 25 hours would be beneficial across the sector in Western Australia to maximise the existing opportunities.

The Northern Territory is also experiencing a severe skills shortage that would benefit from allowing international students to work more hours as well as more flexible visa arrangements to make it easier to apply for visas and allow them to work for longer periods. The peak event period of July to November is a particularly difficult time with hundreds of additional casual staff required to deliver the events during this period.

While we have made particular mention of Perth and the Northern Territory – the skills shortage is being experienced in all States.

Research conducted by Explori for the EEAA of its members found that 36% of respondents stated that availability of staff was a factor that would limit their growth in 2018 and 33% stated that the cost of staff was a factor. The highest ranked recruitment challenges were Experience (39% of respondents) and Skills (23%). The role that was the most difficult to recruit for was Business Development and Sales (36% of respondents).

The EEAA also contributed to a survey on workplace skills for the events industry sector in collaboration with Meetings & Events Australia and the Association of Australian Convention Bureaux which found that one in two respondents were impacted by skills shortages in their ability to recruit. The top five areas were identified as Senior Level Event Management, Business Development Managers, Technical staff, Sales Executives and Mid-level Event Management.

The impact of the current Temporary Skilled Migration Visa system has been to exacerbate these shortages already being experienced by the exhibition and events industry. As well as being more



complicated and costly to administer, the new process has resulted in the rejection of applications which has placed greater pressure on businesses.

We need to ensure that skilled migration is an available and accessible option for our industry in order for the sector to continue to deliver world-class events that are able to compete in the global market. This includes ensuring the cost of sponsorship is not prohibitive for businesses of all sizes and providing a streamlined process for applications.

4.0 THE EXHIBITION AND EVENT INDUSTRY:

The events organised by our members generate substantial economic and social benefits for Australia through the business activity that they stimulate. Exhibitions and events organised by our members generate business activity by bringing buyers and sellers together through “live” events.

A 2015 Report released by Ernst & Young, *The Value of Business Events to Australia*, found that in 2013-2014, over 9.3 million people attended 2,157 exhibitions across Australia. These events directly generated:

- \$3.1 billion in direct expenditure
- \$1.5 billion in direct value added
- 21,000 direct jobs

The study was updated with a high level review in 2017 for the whole business events sector and it was determined that the Australian Business Events Industry in 2016 delivered:

- 429,594 events
- 38.74 delegates
- \$30.20 billion direct expenditure
- \$13.90 direct value add
- 193,203 jobs

The State Governments have a major stake in the business events sector. In December 2016, the new International Conventional Centre (ICC Sydney) opened its doors – in its first year of operation it generated A\$785 million in direct expenditure for the State. In 2017, a new facility was opened at the Adelaide Convention Centre and in 2018 Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre opened its expansion.

These venue and others around the country are all important venues for hosting major trade and consumer expos and their associated conferences and events.

The aims of events organised by EEAA members are to:

- generate financial returns for exhibition and event organisers, venues and suppliers
- generate return on investment for exhibitors
- create an engaging experience for visitors who attend
- demonstrate the power and effectiveness of exhibitions and events as a marketing channel
- Promote a high standard of professionalism for the industry.



The exhibition and events industry is robust and has demonstrated its resilience in the face of tough economic conditions in recent years.

Our research shows visitation to events continues to grow and the sector remains important in terms of attracting visitors to Australia and driving the Australian economy.

For further information contact:

Claudia Hunter

Member Services and Programs Executive

Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia

Email:

Telephone:

Joyce DiMascio

Chief Executive

Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia

Member Services and Programs Executive

Email:

Telephone: