



29 April 2013

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

**re: Framework and operation of subclass 457 visas, Enterprise Migration Agreements and Regional Migration Agreements**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Senate Standing Committees on Legal and Constitutional Affairs inquiry into the Framework and operation of subclass 457 visas, Enterprise Migration Agreements and Regional Migration Agreements.

The Association of Mining and Exploration Companies (AMEC) is the peak national industry body for mineral exploration and mining companies within Australia. The membership of AMEC comprises over 360 explorers, emerging miners and the companies servicing them.

AMEC's strategic objective is to secure an environment that provides clarity and certainty for mineral exploration and mining in Australia in a commercially, politically, socially and environmentally responsible manner.

AMEC has been supportive of the government's workforce planning strategies, including the enhanced Section 457 Visa program, skilled migration programs and vocational education and training programs.

The forecast growth in the resources sector, and subsequent demand for skilled labour will place extreme pressure on Australia's existing capacity to meet that demand in a timely and cost effective manner. It is therefore essential that additional resources are applied to meeting these workforce planning strategies. The government must therefore continue to acknowledge and support the significant benefits of the Section 457 visa program.

Following recommendations made by the National Resources Sector Employment Taskforce, the Federal Government implemented the Enterprise Migration Agreement (EMA) process to address the increasing labour shortages being experienced in the resources sector. In doing so, it also introduced a \$2 billion threshold or 1,500 workers to determine which resource projects are eligible to access EMA's. AMEC considers that EMA's are a valid process and provide another avenue in which to access high numbers of skilled labour. Despite the fact that AMEC remains concerned about the \$2 billion or 1,500 worker thresholds, AMEC notes that smaller and emerging miners are still able to apply for high numbers of skilled labour through the Section 457 Visa program, albeit more time consuming.

Should you require further information on the issues raised in this submission please contact me.

Yours sincerely

**Simon Bennison**

Chief Executive Officer

**Association of Mining and Exploration Companies**

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