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**Input to Joint Standing Committee on Migration
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DEST submission to Joint Standing Committee on Migration

COAG on 10 February 2006, reached agreement on a package of measures designed to underpin a new genuinely national approach to training and skills recognition and alleviate skill shortages currently evident in some parts of the Australian economy. Two important decisions within this package relate to mutual recognition of occupational licences and recognition of overseas qualifications.

As licensing and skills recognition issues cross ministerial portfolios in all jurisdictions, it is necessary for COAG to exercise high-level leadership. Accordingly, COAG has asked Senior Officials from the Prime Minister's, Premiers' and Chief Ministers' departments to oversee the process and report to COAG on progress as milestones are achieved. COAG's detailed timetable for implementation is attached for the two above measures.

COAG agreed to new measures to enable people with trade qualifications to move more freely around Australia without undergoing additional testing and registration processes. COAG has agreed that governments will work with employers and unions to put in place more effective mutual recognition arrangements across States and Territories for electricians, plumbers, motor mechanics, refrigeration and air-conditioning mechanics, carpenters and joiners and bricklayers (skills shortage trades) by June 2007 and by December 2008 for all licensed occupations where people normally receive certificates and diplomas.

Industry and regulators will be involved, along with other stakeholders, to ensure that a streamlined, nationally-consistent system is achieved without increased regulation, while also meeting the commitment to quality standards, including public and worker safety.

To further assist in meeting skills shortages, COAG has agreed to new arrangements to make it easier for migrants with skills to Australian standards to work as soon as they reach Australia. It does not involve any change to the migration policy.

A new streamlined and robust off-shore skills assessment process, to Australian standards, will be put in place in the five main source countries for our skilled migrants by December 2008, initially for skills shortage trades and later for other occupations in the skilled migration program. The overseas assessments will be conducted under the auspices of Trades Recognition Australia (TRA) by accredited organisations or individuals with a proven record in delivering high-quality skills assessments. TRA will be resourced to guarantee the quality of assessments and protect Australian standards.

This will be mirrored by a parallel on-shore assessment arrangement for those who are living in Australia and want skills achieved overseas recognized, and provisional licensing so that people with recognised overseas qualifications can work under supervision for short periods, while they complete licensing requirements.

ADDRESSING SKILLS SHORTAGES THROUGH A NATIONAL APPROACH TO APPRENTICESHIPS, TRAINING AND SKILLS RECOGNITION

ACTION PLAN

Issue	Agreed Outcome	Timeline		
		2006	2007	2008
A more mobile workforce to help meet skills needs				
The effective implementation of full mutual recognition of skills qualifications across Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Individuals in licensed trades have full mutual recognition of their licences in all jurisdictions and do not face duplicate assessment requirements for obtaining qualifications and licences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ in six priority trades - electricians, plumbers, motor mechanics, refrigeration and air-conditioning mechanics, carpenters and joiners and bricklayers ○ in all licensed trades 		By 30 June 2007	
				By 31 December 2008
An appropriate system for recognition of overseas qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A single, pre-migration off-shore assessment process to meet skilled migration and licensing purposes and be accepted for licensed employment throughout Australia for intending migrants from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ India; ○ the United Kingdom; ○ South Africa; ○ Sri Lanka; and ○ South Korea 			

Issue	Agreed Outcome	Timeline		
		2006	2007	2008
	In: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ six priority skills shortage occupations; ▪ all trade occupations in these five countries, as mutual recognition is achieved. 		By 1 July 2007	By 31 December 2008
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A single, pre-migration, off-shore assessment process to meet skilled migration and licensing purposes and be accepted for licensed employment throughout Australia for intending migrants from any country where there are >100 applications per year per assessing body. 			By 31 December 2008
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The assessment process outlined above will be available on-shore for those seeking skills recognition in the 6 priority occupations. 		By 1 July 2007	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Migrants anywhere in Australia will be able to work under short term provisional licensing in the six priority occupations pending final assessment processes 		By 1 July 2007	