



Migration Matters to SA

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An Adelaide migration expert says the implementation of a federal government program that would make it easier for employers in regional and economically-challenged areas to access a broader range of skilled or semi-skilled overseas workers as a step in the right direction.

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection has provided details and draft guidelines regarding a new type of labour agreement under consideration for the recruitment of overseas workers, to be known as the Designated Area Migration Agreement Programme (DAMA).

According to information provided by the Department, the DAMA will provide employers in regional and economically-challenged areas affected by labour or skill shortages access to a broader range of skilled or semi-skilled overseas workers than is currently allowed under the Standard Business Sponsorship (SBS) programme.

Managing director of Migration Solutions, Mark Glazbrook, says the implementation of this programme would be a step in the right direction for the economic development of regional and low population growth areas such as South Australia, which falls below the GDP national average.

Critically, DAMAs are set to differ from standard labour agreements through concessions to several key criteria which have severely restricted their use in the past; English-language requirements, skills and occupation training requirements and the minimum salary threshold.

“This programme will provide an excellent opportunity for regional South Australia to address skill shortages and boost population growth, which in turn will create employment and training opportunities and ensure that essential services can be retained in regional areas,” Mark said.

However, Mr Glazbrook says that despite the positive signs there is still more that can be done to assist local employers.

He says that the reinstatement of a regional 457 visa programme is still critical for South Australia, given that a DAMA agreement will likely be too cost-prohibitive for some employers to consider.

The Department also says the new programme won't disadvantage local workers, stating that the programme has been designed “to ensure employers recruit Australians as a first priority and prioritise initiatives and strategies to facilitate the recruitment and retention of Australian workers”.