

human connections

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Welcome to the first edition of *Human Connections*, a newsletter aimed at keeping our clients up to date with news and changes to legislation that impact on migration and overseas recruitment, and abreast of the news and views of people at ISA.

Our services at a glance

The ISA Group can tailor its services to meet the individual needs of a business, no matter how big or small. Our specialist areas are:

- **Overseas recruitment**—from overseas advertising to negotiating wages and skills testing (including English language assessment), ISA provides a comprehensive overseas recruitment service.
- **Visa and migration advice**—we help our clients navigate the immigration process to make it efficient and uncomplicated.
- **Skills assessment / training advice**—ISA has an established network of trade and industry experts who can conduct quality skills assessment at any national or international location.
- **Human resources consultancy**—we can take care of a business's total needs or provide strategic advice related to specific needs. We can also help new businesses relocating to Australia meet local legislative and statutory HR requirements.



➤ The ISA Group team outside its Subiaco offices.

ISA turns one

It has been a year of rapid growth for the ISA Group.

Immigration Solutions Australia (ISA), established by Noelene and Brett Merrey in 2001, had developed a strong reputation as a provider of visa advisory services and overseas recruitment. In September 2007, ISA merged with WA Corporate Migration and HR Management, a business started in 2000 by Jackie Hill, an experienced human resources practitioner and specialist in 457 (long stay) business visas.

The blending of these two businesses to form the ISA Group has created a business that can provide a full range of services related to overseas recruitment, visa applications and relocations as well as HR advice and strategy.

According to ISA Group director, Brett Merrey, being able to tailor services to meet clients' needs is the key to the business's success.

"We have a depth of experience and breadth of specialist skills that gives us the flexibility to meet the individual needs of a business. These range from requests to recruit staff from overseas for large resource projects to providing out-sourced HR services to smaller companies," said Brett.

"The economic climate in WA is in such a state of buoyancy that it is important for a specialist service company like ISA to be able to quickly respond to a variety of client needs."

More than 30 people work from ISA's Subiaco offices. The company recently opened an office in Bunbury and will soon establish an office in the Philippines.



Immigration
Solutions Australia



ISA Skills & Training



ISA Recruitment



ISA HR
Management



Minimum salary level increases for 457 visa holders
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ISA Group
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ISA Group directors visit the new office in Bunbury.

Bunbury office opens

ISA has opened a permanent office in Bunbury. ISA Group director Noelene Merrey says the move follows a period of sustained business growth in the South West.

"We assist a number of major resource companies and have an increasing number of hospitality clients in the region. Although we have worked out of Bunbury for several years, establishing our own office will help us provide the best possible service to our clients," said Noelene.

"In state terms, the South West has traditionally enjoyed strong economic activity. We have confidence in the long-term outlook for the region and are keen to be part of its future."

ISA's South West team of Maaiki van der Zon, who is a registered migration agent, and office administrator Sharon Bayley will be only too pleased to answer any queries related to migration, recruitment and HR matters.

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New approach delivers results

The ISA group approach to offshore recruitment is providing employers with 'work ready' candidates upon their mobilisation to Australia.

"Recruiting workers from overseas is a complex process, and unsuspecting employers can be caught out if they aren't aware of the pitfalls," said ISA Group director Jackie Hill.

The days of recruiting from CVs with some reference checking is no longer a way of ensuring that "who you recruit is in fact who you get", particularly when it comes to overseas recruitment according to Jackie.

"Using this approach, 75 per cent of candidates who have been short-listed are progressing through to a hands-on skills test assessment to Australian certification in the occupation they are being recruited for," said Jackie.

"This is an excellent outcome when compared to the results of recruiting by interview only. There was a recent case of a candidate, who on paper appeared to meet the requirements of a welding position, admitted at the skills testing stage that he had never welded in his life!

"Without all the steps we have put in



Skills being put to the test in the Philippines as part of a recruitment drive being managed by the ISA Group.

To ensure that the calibre of candidates matches the requirements of employers, ISA has put a number of other checks in place. This approach is being used in a project to help BHP Billiton recruit labour from the Philippines for its Rapid Growth Project 4 at Port Hedland.

The process of short-listing candidates on the basis of CVs has been enhanced by pre-skills testing and verification of work experience. If a candidate makes it through these initial stages, they then proceed to practical skills testing undertaken in the Philippines by an Australian registered training organisation (RTO) to a level equivalent to an Australian qualification.

place in the Philippines, it is possible that this candidate's shortcomings would only have come to light after lengthy and costly interviews, visa processing process and relocation stages," said Jackie.

The role of clients is still important in selecting candidates. They can conduct interviews from Australia using Skype or can accompany ISA personnel to the Philippines to conduct the interviews in person.

ISA Group is currently establishing an office in the Philippines which will encompass a skills testing and training centre. More details in the next edition of *Human Connections*.

Perth a centre for excellence for applications

As of 1 July 2008, applications for sponsored business long stay (subclass 457 visas) and short stay (subclass 459) are being processed from three 'centres of excellence', of which Perth is one.

The move by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship to consolidate the processing of these applications aims to reduce the processing time by using specialist centres of trained staff.

The other two centres are located in Melbourne and Sydney.

Where an application is processed depends on the location of the sponsoring business. If a business has more than one location, the processing centre will be determined by the location of the business's head office.

ISA Group director, Noelene Merrey, welcomes the decision of the department.

"Establishing specialised centres will reduce the processing time, which is clearly a good thing. We will continue to build on our excellent working relationship with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship to the benefit of our clients," said Noelene.

Minimum salary level increases for 457 visa holders

As of 1 August 2008, the minimum salary level (MSL) for temporary skilled overseas workers increased by 3.8 per cent.

The increase was announced by the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans, as a part of a package of reforms outlined in the budget designed to improve the integrity of the 457 visa temporary skilled migration program.

Full details of the impact of the changes can be found at www.immi.gov.au/skilled/skilled-workers/_pdf/457-min-salary-levels.pdf

The full copy of Minister Evans' media statement can be found at www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media-releases/2008/ce08050.htm



ISA Group solicitor and migration agent, Chris de Souza, with the group he led to Sydney for World Youth Day (left) and at one of the sessions to discuss social issues (right).

Expanding boundaries

When ISA Group in-house solicitor and migration agent, Chris de Sousa, led a group of 26 young people from Perth to participate in World Youth Day (WYD) in Sydney, he wasn't sure what to expect.

Chris, who is also a youth group leader at his local church, St Jerome's, in Munster south of Perth described his WYD experience as "one to remember".

"It was an amazing experience to be part of an event that brought together so many different nationalities in a spirit that was positive and uplifting," said Chris.

World Youth Day was held in Sydney from 15 – 20 July and attracted 223,000 young people in what was the biggest event ever held in Australia. The week's activities included a wide range of events such as concerts, displays, and discussion forums where young people discussed social injustice issues such as human trafficking.

"It was great to part of events where ideas were exchanged amongst young people from all parts of the world as well as with

the Cardinals of Rome," said Chris.

"WYD provided many opportunities to broaden young people's views on many issues that they will take back to their own communities.

"It was such a rich cultural experience. Everywhere there were people of different nationalities playing musical instruments such as drums and tambourines, and it took little coaxing for passers-by to join in."

A highlight of WYD was the Pope's Mass at Randwick race course. About half a million people gathered for the event, which was held over two days and involved people camping out the night before.

"You could have heard a pin drop when the Pope spoke," said Chris. "The audience was totally captivated and he was able to connect on a level that reached everyone. It was like having a personal audience."

The experience must have been a positive one, as Chris and members of his youth group are already planning their fundraising effort so they can attend the next WYD in Spain in 2011.

Monitoring requirements for business sponsorships

In response to the failure of some businesses to comply with their obligations as business sponsors, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship is being more stringent in its monitoring of business sponsors.

A reminder of your requirements as a business sponsor:

- Sponsored employees must earn a **base** salary of \$43,400 (\$39,165 if on a regional salary waiver) for non information and communication technology (ICT) workers, which must not include:
 - leave-loading payments
 - any overtime payment for work performed above 38 hours per week
 - penalty payments not forming part of ongoing shift arrangements based on a 38-hour week
 - allowances relating to the position (e.g. tool allowance)
 - accommodation, rental assistance, board, meals or entertainment allowances.

Failure to comply can result in the cancellation of a business sponsorship. More information about sponsor requirements is available at www.immi.gov.au/skilled/skilled-workers/sbs/obligations-employer.htm

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An honour to be an Honorary Consul

ISA's marketing manager, Jenny White, has another role in life that not only expands her personal boundaries but contributes to building relations with another country.

Jenny is a member of a select group who has the honour of being an Honorary Consul to another country, which in Jenny's case is Botswana.

Jenny is the first Botswana Honorary Consul appointed in WA, and follows a long history of fostering trade relations between Australia and the emerging African nation.

Before moving to Perth nine years ago, Jenny was an executive member of the then Australian Southern Africa Business Council (now called the Australia African Business Council) for five years in South Australia.

It was during a five-year stint as president of the WA chapter of the council that Jenny's enthusiasm and skills came to the notice of the Botswana High Commissioner who invited Jenny to take on the consul role when it was created last year. She was quick to accept.

In her role, Jenny identifies business and trade opportunities between Botswana and WA and assists with and meets visiting trade delegations. She also helps people applying for visas to visit Botswana—something Jenny is only too familiar with in her role at ISA—and supports people from Botswana living in WA, many of whom are students.

Jenny was invited to visit Botswana in March this year as part of an organised tour for the three Australian honorary consuls (the other two are based in Melbourne and Sydney).

"It is a beautiful country that has stunning features such as the Okavango Delta and Kalahari Desert, and some areas are quite similar in topography to parts of Western Australia," said Jenny.

The similarities don't end there. "Like WA,



Botswana Honorary Consul and ISA Group marketing manager, Jenny White.

Botswana has a strong economy, which is largely based on diamond mining and the outlook is strong. The country has experienced sustained economic growth over many decades, which is creating a new upwardly mobile section of the population that presents opportunities for WA businesses," said Jenny.

"In particular, people need the services of financial planners, and the massive increase in the number of people driving cars gives rise to a demand as simple as more driving schools."

Recently Jenny has assisted a large international company considering establishing a copper mine in Botswana by providing them with contacts to help advance their business interests.

Jenny's appointment as Botswana Honorary Consul is for an indefinite period and given her passion for the role and country, it is a role she hopes to continue for some time.

The Botswana Honorary Consul operates from the ISA Group's Subiaco offices.