

human connections

ISSUE 3 MAY 2009

Changes to the Critical Skills List

A consequence of the current economic climate has been the removal of a number of

trade occupations from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's (DIAC) Critical Skills List (CSL).

Trade occupations that have been removed include bricklayers, carpenters, plumbers, welders, and metal fitters. The list now comprises mainly health and medical, engineering and IT professions.

The full list of CSL is available at <http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/general-skilled-migration/pdf/critical-skills-list.pdf>

Taking care of the details

In addition to advising clients to ensure they have the right visas for their Subclass 457 visa holders, ISA Group can also help new arrivals settle into Australian life with a range of additional services that include:

- Providing a meet and greet service at the airport.
- Setting up local bank accounts.
- Requesting tax file numbers.
- Arranging private health insurance.

For more information on these services please call ISA Group on 9346 8888.



Economic climate impacts migration

Rarely has there been such a flurry of changes to Australia's migration policies, particularly in respect to the Subclass 457 program. Since the beginning of the year, the Federal Government has made a number of changes in light of the slowing economy and the need to protect local jobs.

Some of the key changes announced include:

- 14 per cent cut in the 2008/09 skilled migration program intake (from 133,000 to 115,000).
- Removal of several trades from the Critical Skills List (see article this page).
- Increasing the existing minimum language requirement for 457 visa applicants in trade occupations and chefs to IELTS level 5.
- An increase in the minimum salary level of 457 visa holders to reflect market rates.
- A requirement that employers demonstrate their commitment to local labour hire and training.

According to ISA Group Director and Principal Migration Consultant, Noelene Merrey, the changes do not signal the end of skilled migration.

"Up until the end of last year, extraordinarily high numbers of overseas skilled workers were needed to enable the Australia economy to keep pace with growth. With the downturn in some industries, it is no surprise that migration numbers have been reviewed," said Noelene.

"Although there is no longer a labour shortage, certain skilled roles are still in short supply and we are receiving enquiries from some very large start-up projects that



ISA Group Director and Principal Migration Consultant, Noelene Merrey.

need to employ overseas workers in those occupations that are still in demand.

"We expect overseas workers will still have an important role to play in the current economy, and there are many signals that this will increase as predictions for economic growth are realised. More than 110,000 skilled workers are expected to migrate here in 2008/09 and that is a lot of people."

A positive to have emerged from the spotlight on 457 visas has been the increased demand for permanent residency.

"Australia has benefitted from the experience and expertise of temporary overseas workers, and now these benefits will be enduring as many temporary workers, with the support of their employers, choose to settle here permanently," said Noelene.

ISA Group's migration agents are available to provide further information on the changes and answer any queries.



Immigration Services



Recruitment



Special Projects



HR Management



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ISA Group
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New Manila training centre opens

In partnership with two joint venture partners, ISA has opened a skills testing and training centre in Manila aimed at international businesses that recruit skilled labour from the Philippines.

Not deterred by the current economic downturn, ISA Group has invested in the centre after identifying a gap in the services and facilities available in the Philippines when it was asked to create a pool of skilled overseas labour for BHP Billiton's sub-contractors to draw upon for the RPG4 project iron ore expansion project.

ISA Group Director, Jackie Hill, said that while recruiting skilled labour in the Philippines is a regular activity for ISA Group and many other businesses, the need to verify the skills of a large number of applicants posed a unique set of challenges.

"To create a labour pool of more than 110 skilled workers for BHP Billiton, we needed to confirm skill levels with 'hands on' testing and provide



IIM Training Centre.

training offshore to Australian standards to ensure that successful applicants would be 'work ready' when they arrived in Australia.

"We found there wasn't a venue where we could do this as well as run safety briefings and inductions under one roof," said Jackie.

Another issue was the lack of suitable equipment and trainers to ensure that

applicants met Australian skill levels and safety standards in trades such as scaffolding, formwork carpentry and mechanical fitting.

In response, ISA Group partnered with Darwin-based Industries Services Training (IST) and a Manila-based manning agency, Multi-orient Manpower Management Services (MOMMS), to create the IIM skills testing and



training centre as a 'one-stop' location that can be used for all steps of recruitment including inductions and language testing to meet visa requirements.

The centre comprises various-sized rooms totalling 440 sqm in addition to external areas and workshops that can be used for skills testing in heavy and light engineering trades. A commercial kitchen is also available to test and train applicants for jobs in the hospitality industry.

Understanding that each recruitment campaign is different, Jackie says the centre has been established with flexibility in mind.

"Clients can choose to use the centre simply to conduct interviews or as an office base while in Manila, or use the full range of services through to English testing and pre-relocation briefings.

"We also appreciate that recruiting companies may want to use their own training organisations, which we can accommodate or we can arrange trainers to meet their needs," said Jackie.

Onsite accommodation and catering is available for local applicants to use during the selection process.

Although the centre has only

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ISA Group's Brett Merrey (right) with guests at the IIM launch in Manila.



Guests at the launch included JV partners MOMMS' owner, Captain Herrera (second from left), and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Republic of the Philippines, the Hon. Reynato Puno.

Opening of Manila IIM centre cont.



➤ The new Manila skills testing and training centre offers several training and meeting rooms in addition to external testing areas for trades such as welding and scaffolding.

been open for a few weeks, ISA has fielded enquiries from as far as Canada, Singapore and within Australia for uses as diverse as welding and four wheel drive training.

“While the economic downturn is being felt across a lot of sectors, we are still receiving requests for overseas recruitment and immigration services from large resource projects, and the demand from the oil and gas sector hasn’t diminished at all,” said Jackie.

“There are countries that still have labour shortages in certain skill areas, and we will actively market the IIM centre internationally to reach them and hope that Australian demand will increase once the economic tide turns.

When that happens we will be well and truly ready,” she said

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship’s recent announcement of its intention to introduce skills testing of workers in trade occupations from countries

considered ‘high risk’, including the Philippines, from July 2009, is expected to generate interest in the IIM centre.

“With the introduction of these testing requirements, we expect the IIM centre will be in demand from Australian companies that recruit labour from the Philippines,” said Jackie.

For more information on the IIM centre, visit www.iim.com.ph

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ISA at APPEA

ISA Group will exhibit at what is considered the nation's leading oil and gas industry event, the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association (APPEA) Conference and Exhibition in Darwin from 31 May to 3 June 2009.

ISA Director, Jackie Hill, said she was looking forward to the opportunity to meet with existing and potential clients.

"ISA Group is possibly the biggest, or at least one of the biggest, providers of immigration services to the oil and gas industry, particularly maritime operations," said Jackie.

"Understanding the immigration needs of

businesses that undertake work in Australian waters is a specialist area in which we have a strong track record. I am looking forward to the opportunity of explaining why international companies that work offshore in Australia need to incorporate immigration into their project planning to avoid project delays because they haven't factored in the time and effort it takes to provide crews with correct visas." she said.

ISA Group will share stand 56 with training provider, Industries Services Training, which ISA has partnered with in the IIM Manila training centre (see pages 2 & 3).

Changes in visa processing priorities for permanent residents

As part of the recent wave of migration changes, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) is processing General Skills Migration (GSM) applications that are State/Territory sponsored or for occupations that are included on the new Critical Skills List as a priority. DIAC will still process other GSM applications, but because these are considered a lower priority, applicants may be in for a long wait that even DIAC can't predict with any accuracy.

Meet our newest migration agent

After a work history with ISA Group that goes back to 2003 and spans two countries, Lesley Ooi is our newest registered migration agent.

Lesley's association with ISA (then known as Immigration Solutions Australia) began in Kuala Lumpur where she worked for one of ISA's overseas agencies. Lesley organised seminars to promote moving to Australia and got first-hand experience of the visa process by compiling documents/information for visa applications and sending these through to ISA's Perth office for lodging.

Originally from Penang, Lesley and her husband made the decision to migrate to Australia in 2006, at which time she joined the ISA team in Perth. Until now she has supported the work of migration agents in the important role of document processing officer. Last year, Lesley decided to take the next step to become a full-fledged migration agent by taking the migration agent course at Murdoch University.

The course involved night classes and many weekend hours of study over several months, but Lesley is proud of her achievement.

"After all these years working in the industry it seemed like a logical step," said Lesley, who gets great satisfaction from her work.

"Moving to Australia provides people with a chance for



a better life and I get great pleasure in seeing people so happy when their applications are approved, especially when it enables families to have a chance to reunite or live here," said Lesley.

Lesley knows from personal experience of the magnitude of the decision to move countries and was anxious about the impact of the move on her own children—a daughter now aged 10 and a son, aged 13.

"We need not have worried about the adjustment as they love it here and we have no regrets at all. Australia is a great place for families," said Lesley.

Recognising the need to get the family/work balance right, ISA Group is happy for Lesley to work school hours, and the fact that she works only a few minutes' drive from her home and children's school makes the arrangement even better.

Congratulations on your achievement of becoming a registered migration agent Lesley.

The sweet taste of success

Michael De Marte, owner of Atomic Café, got more than he bargained for when he asked ISA Group to help him recruit an overseas chef for his popular South Perth café six months ago.

Michael, who had been having trouble finding a local chef with the required skills and experience, has nothing but praise for Filipino chef, Jay Blancio, who ISA Group found using its recruitment office in the Philippines.

“Not only has Jay proven to be a skilled and enthusiastic chef, but his strong work ethic has rubbed off onto the others as productivity and quality has improved. Because of his international experience, I have been able to expand our menu which has probably had a lot to do with increasing our growth by 40 per cent since Jay started,” said Michael.

The café presently opens between 6am and 5pm due to the limited availability of staff, but Michael hopes to expand the opening hours to midnight every day of the week.

Key to increasing the opening hours is the need to recruit an additional chef from the Philippines. ISA Group has identified a candidate that meets Michael’s needs and is in the process of filing an application for a Subclass 457 visa.

Although the Federal Government has tightened the requirements of businesses sponsoring overseas workers, ISA Group’s head of recruitment, Brett Merrey, says the addition of an overseas



↑ Chef Jay Blancio at the Atomic Cafe in South Perth.

worker at Atomic Café will boost the Australian economy.

“Atomic already employs 11 local people, but has shown that employing an overseas chef has helped to grow its business, which naturally has a flow-on effect to local suppliers,” said Brett.

“We are confident that we can demonstrate how the employment of another overseas chef will enable the business to grow as well as provide valuable skills sharing opportunities to the Australian chefs on staff.”

Despite a climate of economic uncertainty, Atomic Café has experienced a dramatic increase in business over the past four months and Michael is optimistic of a bright outlook.

“We are currently preparing to open a restaurant in Nedlands and scouting for a location for a third. If we are successful in recruiting a second chef, I expect we will be asking ISA Group to help us even more in the future,” said Michael.

Don’t leave it to chance



Although the spotlight may appear to be firmly shining on migration numbers, the Federal Government is just as intent on ensuring that businesses that sponsor Subclass 457 visa holders are meeting their sponsorship obligations.

ISA Group Director, Jackie Hill, says the risk of not meeting sponsorship requirements is not worth it.

“Not only can non-compliance incur large fines, but companies that rely on using specialised staff from overseas can have their projects put at risk because their status as a sponsor could be put in jeopardy,” said Jackie.

“They also face the possibility of a ban on sponsoring overseas workers for up to five years and a cancellation of a sponsorship, which has obvious ramifications for the sponsored worker.”

Sponsoring businesses need to meet a number of requirements, such as paying the correct salary and meeting the cost of a sponsored worker’s return travel costs, but they may also include paying for medical or hospital costs not met by health insurance of Medicare, where eligible.

Other requirements include:

- Ensuring obligations for PAYG tax and superannuation are the same as for Australian employees.
- Notifying the Department of Citizenship and Immigration (DIAC) of changes to the nature of a sponsorship

such as a change of address, changes to a company’s structure and details of any mergers.

- Ensuring sponsored workers hold the required licence, registration or membership that is mandatory for their role.
- Advising DIAC of any substantial changes to the role and responsibilities of a sponsored worker – this may require a new visa application.

“We have recently run audits for large businesses of their sponsorship agreements with some alarming results,” said Jackie.

“Although the businesses weren’t deliberately trying to mislead DIAC, their failure to set up processes to monitor the status of their sponsored workers meant that some obligations were not being met.

“Fortunately, we were able to help the businesses by identifying and correcting those areas they were not meeting and avoid any disruption to their business.

“Sponsors should consider doing an immigration audit as a necessary ‘health check’ for their business,” said Jackie

For more information about ISA Group’s monitoring and compliance service, please contact Jackie Hill on 9346 8888.