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NEW AGREEMENT TO MEET DARWIN’S GROWTH CHALLENGES

The Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Chris Bowen MP, and Northern Territory Deputy Chief Minister, Delia Lawrie MLA, today announced a new migration program for the Darwin region to help employers fill skills and labour shortages associated with major projects.

“The Federal Government has commenced negotiating Australia’s first Regional Migration Agreement (RMA) for the Top End of the Northern Territory, which is designed to help regions hire overseas workers where there is a genuine need to do so,” Mr Bowen said.

“Darwin is set to experience huge growth, with demand for workers expected to outstrip local and national supply.

“This RMA will act as a pressure valve for the local economy, helping businesses experiencing a shortage of staff to find workers when none can be sourced locally.”

The RMA program, which is expected to be in place in the first half of this year, aims to assist small businesses which may find it difficult to use standard migration programs while ensuring Australians remain the first choice for employers.

“The NT Government is focused on seeing Territorians benefit from major projects such as Ichthys. While we are investing heavily in local training, it is still not enough to meet demand in a competitive Australian labour market,” Ms Lawrie said.

“Major projects will draw local workers away from smaller employers, and this RMA will assist those businesses to backfill these gaps in their workforce.

“After consulting with employers, community groups and unions about how labour shortages are impacting them, we will now be conducting targeted stakeholder consultations to ensure community views are taken into account in finalising the RMA program.”

The RMA program was announced in the 2011-12 Budget to offer a coordinated, localised response to labour needs. Darwin has been chosen as the first RMA location due to current labour shortages which are expected to be further exacerbated by several major resource projects.

Other regional areas experiencing skills and labour shortages will be eligible for RMAs in the coming months, with guidelines on the application process to be published by the end of March.


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