

IPA MEDIA RELEASE

Institute of Public Affairs | Australia's leading free market think tank

Friday, 18th March 2011

REGULATION & LABOUR RESTRICTIONS WILL HARM AUSTRALIA'S ECONOMY AS SEVERE SKILLS SHORTAGES LOOM

The Commonwealth Government's response to the National Resources Sector Employment Taskforce's *Resourcing the Future* report this week reveals the urgency of skills shortages in Australia.

'Australia needs to consider how we will cope with the imminent problem of skills shortages in our resource sector,' John Roskam, Executive Director of the Institute of Public Affairs said today.

The taskforce, chaired by the Hon Gary Gray AO, has estimated that of the 136,000 new jobs created in the resources sector in the next five years, 36,000 will not be filled.

'Australia's economy is at risk here. We need to start addressing the regulatory barriers that are restricting northern Australia's potential growth as a world leader in resources,' Mr Roskam argued.

'We need to look at solutions. We need to think outside the box in terms of Australia's migration and employment policies.'

The Western Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry's recent report to the Sustainable Population Taskforce called for the pressing need to revise Australia's temporary migrant regulations.

'The Chamber has exposed some serious flaws in government regulation related to temporary migrant visas. It is clear that language prerequisites need to be reduced or eliminated and wages should be based on their market value.'

'Guest workers should have the opportunity to gain employment here without so many restrictions. The need for a greater employable population in Australian industries is the government's chance to make some real reforms in temporary worker migration policy,' said Mr Roskam.

Mr Roskam welcomed the Gillard government's first steps to helping secure Australia's future by adopting all 31 policies in the *Resourcing the Future* report but said it should be taken further.

'Australia needs business and economic security. The Gillard government must follow through on their promise and then take it even further. Australia needs more flexible industrial relations and migration laws so that we can fulfil our economic growth potential, particularly in Australia's north.'

Media Comment: John Roskam Executive Director 0415 475 673