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11 June 2009

## RE EFFECT OF THE 2009 BUDGET UPON THE MIGRATION PROGRAM

Included in the Budget announced by the Federal Treasurer on 12 May 2009 were a series of changes that will directly impact upon the migration program in the 2009/10 financial year, as follows:

- Total places for FY2009/10 in the migration program will be 168,700. This is comprised of 60,300 family places, 108,100 skilled places and 300 places for special eligibility.
- In response to the economic slowdown the permanent skilled migration intake will be reduced to 108,000 which is a further 14% drop to the reduction announced in January 2009 (133,500). This represents a 20% reduction from FY2008/09 planning levels. The reduction will largely affect the General Skilled Migration category of visas rather than in the high demand employer-sponsored category or in areas in which Australia has critical skills shortages.
- A job-readiness test will be introduced for onshore skilled applicants (in line with current arrangements for offshore skilled applicants). The Department of Immigration & Citizenship describes this as a “targeted skills-testing regime”.
- English language requirements for trade occupations will be increased to IELTS 6.0 from 1 July 2009 for offshore applicants and 1 January 2009 for onshore applicants.
- There will be fewer visas granted to trade level occupations.
- A 3,800 increase in family migration places to 60,300 (an additional 2,500 for partner visas, 1,000 for contributory parent visas, and 200 for child visas).
- A 250 increase in places in the offshore humanitarian/refugee program to 13,750 (being 7,750 special humanitarian and 6,000 refugees). The main resettlement focus will continue to be on refugees from the three key regions of Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

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- Increased funding for the improvement of detention centres, including \$186.3 million to extensively redevelop the Villawood Immigration Detention Centre over the next 5-year period.
- Increased funding for the establishment on the new office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority.
- DIAC staff reductions.

Please contact our office if you would like to discuss any of these announced changes.

**Kah Lawyers**