

Gas Supply

The Turnbull Government is repairing gas markets, making sure more and more affordable gas is delivered to Australian homes and businesses.

The Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Ministers Frydenberg, Canavan and Sinodinos today met with gas industry executives and the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) Chief Executive, to work through both the short term and long term challenges facing households and business in getting access to gas at reasonable prices.

The meeting heard that that the industry, including pipeline operators and generators, with AEMO, have developed a framework to make sure gas is delivered at times of peak electricity demand to prevent blackouts. The arrangement will be in place by 1 October this year well in time to prepare for the next summer.

The gas industry has also revised supply and production figures which, subject to further study by AEMO, will help address projected shortfalls.

The meeting also discussed the agreement of the COAG Energy Council to accelerate gas market and pipeline reforms with rollout to commence from 1 July 2017. The meeting further noted the critical role of the states and territories in enabling gas exploration and development.

To verify the progress in gas supply, the Treasurer has today directed the ACCC to establish a monitoring regime by using its inquiry powers to compel the gas industry to provide information, to underpin a new transparency in the gas market to the benefit of consumers.

This new measure will shine a light on transactions with the Australian gas market and help it operate more fairly and efficiently.

This work will run over three years, with regular public reporting, and will give the ACCC and market participants a complete picture of the gas market. It will increase transparency, facilitate competition and ensure the gas market is operating well.

While this progress is encouraging a lot more needs to be done.

The Government remains concerned that the east coast export LNG operators have not yet clearly articulated how Australian households and business will get adequate supply at reasonable prices.

The Government has asked the exporters to provide further information, in the context of possible regulatory options to address the short term market issues.

Keynote address at the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Breakfast

PRIME MINISTER:

Good morning, and thank you very much Terry. It is great to be here this morning with you all and with the Minister, Peter Dutton, Minister for Immigration and Border Protection.

You summarised some of our achievements since the election, Terry, and thank you for that. I'm glad to know that there's still a few things left to do on your list. But we have made a lot of progress since the election. We've got a lot of legislation through the Senate that many people said would be unworkable, with fewer seats in the house and fewer in the senate.

We have managed to secure the passage of legislation that we had no chance of getting through in the last parliament. We showed the courage of our convictions. We haven't backed away from tough issues. We haven't kicked things into the long grass. We have got on with it. We have restored the rule of law to the building and construction sector as you said. We have delivered tax cuts for companies with turnovers of up to \$50 million over the next few years. In fact, we have delivered our enterprise tax agenda to companies and businesses that employ more than half of all Australians.

But I'm here to today to talk, however, about migration.

I'm talking about the greatest assets of Australia which are not under the ground, but walking around on top of it – 24 million of us.

We are as old as our First Australians, who have cared for this country for more than 50,000 years. And we are today here on Ngunnawal land, cared for by the First Australians here in this district, for tens of thousands of years and we honour them, and we honour their elders past and present, here on their land.

These First Australians have cared for Australia for time out of mind. They embody the oldest continuous human cultures on earth.

But at the same time we are as young as the baby in the arms of her migrant mother.

We are an immigration nation. We are the most successful multicultural society in the world.

28 per cent of us were born outside Australia and nearly half of us have a parent who was.

In my own city of Sydney 40 per cent of people in Sydney were born overseas

and around half have parents born overseas.

So what makes this work? What makes this work?

Immigration is, and always should be, conducted resolutely in the national interest.

Our immigration programme is a recruiting exercise. Peter Dutton, he's the head of human resources, he's the chief recruiter for Australia to get the best and brightest from the world and to make sure that the people we want to come into Australia come in, and those who we have not permitted to come in do not. That's what it is about. This is about recruiting.

Now it has been ever thus.

Right through to the 1960s most Australians saw themselves as thoroughly British – as Menzies said: 'The boundaries of Britain are not on the Kentish coast but at Invercargill, the bottom of the South Island of New Zealand and Cape York'.

And migration was overwhelmingly from the British Isles until, with a mixture of nation building ambition and an anxiety best summarised as "populate or perish" about an invasion from the populous north, migration was ramped up after the Second World War with thousands of European migrants, including many refugees.

These men and women, came together to build modern Australia. Men who had fought against each other – Germans and Poles, Italians and Greeks – worked together with Australians to realise the great projects of the 50s and 60s, and of course none greater than the Snowy Mountains Scheme itself which we are going to deliver Snowy Hydro 2.0. We are going to deliver on that vision of that era, the next stage, plans that were drawn up originally in that era of nation building, we're getting on with.

Now our migration programme, including the humanitarian stream, brings people from every corner of the world and in the midst of this extraordinary diversity we have maintained our Australian values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law and a unique sense of fairness alongside a spirit of enterprise.

We believe in a fair go and opportunity, that people should help themselves but be able to count on a hand up when they fall behind.

Now, these distinctive national characteristics have helped us to achieve what others can only dream of.

Economically we stand tall, with over 26 years of unbroken economic growth.

And in a world of conflict, we are a harmonious mixture of races, cultures and faiths, where mutual respect has made our differences a strength, not a weakness.

Our Australian values have united us.

That is a remarkable achievement in a world which seems, despite all of its technological advances, so much less tolerant in many parts of the world than it was a generation or even a century ago.

These achievements have not happened by accident. We have succeeded because we understand that one can and must complement the other – by adjusting the policy settings we are ensuring that they continue to do so.

Now more than ever, we must harness our migration program and fully utilise its potential to guarantee our future prosperity.

These are the most extraordinary times in human history, with economic change unprecedented in its scale and pace. Technology has transformed our lives in ways we could not have imagined a decade ago. And our greatest imaginings today can only hint at what technology will do for us in the coming decades.

In these times of challenge and change, my Government is focused on providing opportunity and security, opportunity and security for all Australians. We are bringing a more competitive edge to our tax system, as Terry observed, our energy markets, our economy.

We cannot remain a prosperous high wage first world economy with a generous social welfare safety net unless we are more competitive, innovative and productive.

If Australia is a football team – our migration programme is the way we recruit the best players. It is conducted in our national interest. Our migration programme is conducted in Australia's national interest.

Our migration story has never been without controversy. The post war mass migration of Europeans, the abolition of the White Australia Policy, the development of a thoroughly multicultural migration system in modern times.

The largest single group of immigrants today is from India, Chinese is the second most spoken language at home in Sydney after English. Australians are growing up in a society others can only dream of – diverse in race, culture and religion and yet harmonious.

And we should be proud of that.

I spoke with pride in the United Nations General Assembly last year when I described the way in which we have achieved what has been denied to so many other nations – that harmony – and I set out in detail how we have built that on a foundation of a migration system that is respected and borders that are secure.

Now, our success, as I said at the UN, is in large measure a consequence of Australians knowing that their government, and it alone, determines who comes to Australia, how long they stay, and makes that determination in Australia's national interest.

Understanding why we have been successful is critical to ensuring we continue to be successful – strong borders, vigilant security agencies governed by the

rule of law, and a steadfast commitment to the shared values of freedom and mutual respect.

Around the world support for migration has disintegrated in countries where people feel their borders are no longer secure and their governments have lost control – that’s a fact. It has disintegrated in countries where governments have lost control of their borders and their migration system has got out of control. Out of control migration, irregular migration has threatened the social fabric of those nations.

European leaders have described the collapse in migration security in their continent as an existential threat. We should not underestimate the importance of a strong migration system and secure borders. We must never underestimate that and we must not take our achievement in that regard for granted.

We faced a situation of that kind under Labor when they abandoned John Howard’s proven policies and lost control of our borders. In the ensuing chaos, as we recall, there were 50,000 irregular arrivals aboard 800 boats. A thousand people a week were arriving on Christmas Island. 8, 000 children were placed in immigration detention in Australia and, most tragically of all, 1200 lives–of which we know–were lost at sea.

Australians lost confidence in the system. Our nation lost the advantages that flow from properly controlled migration.

Since 2013 the Coalition has restored the strong border protection policies of the Howard Government. There has not been a successful people smuggling expedition to Australia for almost a thousand days.

But I can assure you that neither the Minister nor I nor any member of our Government takes that for granted or has a moment of complacency about it. We are ever vigilant to ensure that our borders remain secure.

Under Labor net migration peaked at an unsustainable 315,000 migrants a year. It is now less than 200,000.

We are back in control of their borders.

It means we are able to do what Labor could not do – set the parameters for a well-regulated, sustainable migration program and focus our humanitarian efforts on those whom we judge most in need.

And it means we can harness migration for the benefit of our economy and for all Australians.

Migrants have brought diversity, creativity, and in areas like IT where we are producing too few graduates, they have brought vitally needed skills.

Our skilled visa program has allowed us to tap into the best and brightest minds around the world. More than 65 per cent of permanent visas accessed in 2015/16 were by skilled professionals who are now an integral part of our workforce.

But migration must be in our national interest.

And now that we are back in control, we can use it to bolster the workforce with the skills we need while making sure that vacancies are filled by Australians first. Australian jobs for Australians first. That must be the commitment, that must be the objective. That is our obligation.

Now, Labor not only mishandled this aspect of migration, but under Bill Shorten as the employment minister it upended the usual practice and actually put foreign workers first.

As is often the case with Mr Shorten, he does not practice what he preaches. Despite claiming he wants to protect Australian jobs, as employment minister he granted a record number of 457 Visas. He even did special deals for fast food restaurants.

He blames the 457 explosion during his time on the mining boom. He increased 457s by two-thirds. Said it was all about the mining boom. Less than 10 per cent went into the mining industry. Two-thirds of them went to Sydney and Melbourne.

The 457 visa was designed originally to fill gaps in the workforce that could not be filled by Australian workers.

Labor used it to fast track foreign workers into jobs ahead of Australians – jobs like auctioneers, driving instructors, workplace relations advisers – I don't think any of you would imagine there was a shortage of local talent in that regard. I mean – really! When you look at the list of skills that were on the list that we inherited from Labor, it is actually, it is laughable. Radio announcers – anyone in the media here concerned that there's a gap in radio announcers? I think most people in the media sector feel there are too few jobs for Australians, not huge skill gaps.

The reality is the system was abused, it was abused by Labor, it was discredited, it lost its credibility.

We have already reined in Labor's excesses, reducing the 457 visa grants. We've stopped the rorts like the fast food labour agreements. At the same time, we've helped create half a million jobs for Australians, but that is only the start of the overhaul and we are making this as part of our push to build a more competitive economy creating opportunity and security for all of us.

The temporary work system must better prioritise Australian workers and ensure we bring in genuinely skilled labour, not simply become the training ground for others.

This week we have announced important changes that mark another milestone in our efforts to ensure our migration system is working in our best interests.

The 457 visa will be abolished and replaced with a new temporary visa, underpinned by skills lists that are focused on critical skills shortages and more stringent conditions.

We will no longer allow 457 visas to be passports to jobs that could and should go to Australians.

There will be two visa classes – one for up to two, another for four years. The skills list for the four-year stream, the medium term stream, will be more restricted to strategic skills shortages – in fact there will be more than 400 fewer skills on it, fewer occupations on it than under the current 457s – currently 183 versus well over 600 on the 457 list. And the short term visa, the two-year visa will have more than 200 fewer occupations on it.

We are focusing on the list of skills we need and reducing it from a grab bag of around 650 occupations to a bit over 400 for the two-year visa and as I noted 183 for the four year one.

And we will work with business so the list responds to your needs and the needs of our economy – the short term occupation list will be reviewed every six months and the medium term one every year.

Throughout, the test will be the availability of Australian skilled labour.

Labour market testing will be generally mandatory, at least two years of work experience will be required – currently none is. A higher standard of English will be required for the four-year visa.

Where skilled Australian workers are not available, migration should be able to provide business with the critical skills that they need to grow. But Australian workers must have priority for jobs in our country.

Foreign workers add value to the nation, but they must supplement and not replace hardworking Australians.

The new Temporary Skills Shortage Visa will give business incentives to employ Australian workers first.

And it will help train Australians to fill the skill gaps in the workforce with a new training fund to take the place of the existing benchmark system, as recommended by the 457 visa review commenced in 2014.

Employers who nominate workers for the temporary visas will contribute to the fund which will support skills development and take-up of apprenticeships and traineeships. We will announce more details in the Budget.

Similar changes will be made to the Permanent Employer Sponsored Visas whether Employer Nominated or Regional Sponsored Migration schemes. The maximum age will be reduced from 50 to 45, competent English will be mandatory, no exceptions, and the pathway to permanent residency will begin at three years, not two years.

Our changes to citizenship will also enable our migration program to contribute still further to our social cohesion while enhancing our security.

Australia must continue to attract people who will embrace our values and positively contribute – regardless of their nationality or religious beliefs.

This is important for temporary visas and vital for permanent residency and citizenship. Citizenship must be valued and we are making changes so that the practices and principles of those obtaining citizenship are consistent with our cultural values.

Our reforms are designed to get more out of our migration system, to realise its potential to contribute to our economy.

They will also ensure that each new migrant has the skills and the outlook to contribute to Australia and our economy in the way we need them to. This ability to 'hit the ground running' will benefit both our migrants and our nation by helping them integrate into our culture and our workforce.

It is not an understatement to say that the modern Australian nation was built on immigration. We are, as I often said an immigration nation. We see it in the physical infrastructure that we use every day, we experience it in the extraordinary wealth of culture that surrounds us and which we all enjoy, we feel it in the unique Australian character to which every Australian contributes, we are the most remarkable nation and we should, we should not be backward in identifying shortcomings where we can do better, but we should vocal, proud of what we have achieved.

I say to you my friends, our achievements here in Australia, the most successful multicultural society in the world are extraordinary. Almost unique in the world. It is a remarkable achievement but the foundation of that is a strong migration system that Australians understand is controlled by their government, the government they elect, responsible to the Parliament they elect, governed by the laws that that parliament enacts. It is fundamental to maintaining our harmony that we have a migration system that Australians respect.

We know what happens when countries lose control of migration. We saw it here when Labor lost control of the migration system.

We have secured our borders. We are reforming migration. We are putting Australians and Australian jobs and Australian values and Australia's national interest first.

Thank you very much.

Great to be with you.

[ENDS]

Secretary of the Defence Department

Mr Dennis Richardson AO has advised me that he wishes to tender his

resignation as Secretary of the Department of Defence with effect from 12 May 2017.

Mr Richardson has had a long and distinguished career and has made a significant contribution to Australia's national security and foreign policy over 48 years of public service. He was appointed as Secretary of Defence in 2012 having served previously as the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2010-2012), Australian Ambassador to the United States of America (2005-10) and the Director-General of Security (1996-2005). He previously worked in the Departments of Immigration and Prime Minister and Cabinet, and served as principal adviser to Prime Minister Hawke from 1990 to 1991.

In this near half century of service, Mr Richardson has served twelve Prime Ministers with consistent professionalism. His commitment to public service, his strategic insight, his candour and integrity have made him a trusted adviser to Governments from both sides of Australian politics.

On behalf of the Government and the Australian people, I thank Mr Richardson for his leadership and service and I wish him and his wife, Betty, all the very best for the future.

Brendan Sargeant, Associate Secretary, will be Acting Secretary pending the appointment of Mr Richardson's successor.

[Radio interview with Kim Landers, ABC AM](#)

KIM LANDERS:

New visa arrangements start today to limit which jobs will be open to skilled workers from overseas.

While the Federal Government says its abolishing 457 visas it will still allow employers to bring in foreign skilled workers under two new classes of visa. But it will tighten the rules and scrap many of the job categories that could previously be filled by overseas workers. The Government is also expected to announce a training package soon to help ensure more Australians are capable of filling those jobs. For more, the Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull joins me on the line now. Prime Minister good morning.

PRIME MINISTER:

Good morning.

KIM LANDERS:

How many Australians will get jobs as a result of these tighter restrictions on foreign workers?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well certainly there will be more opportunities for Australians to get jobs. The reality is that we have to make sure that Australian jobs are for Australians first and foremost. This is about putting Australians first, Australian jobs first, Australian values first.

KIM LANDERS:

Well you say you're doing it to promote jobs for Australians so do you have a rough idea of how much employment it might create?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well what it will do, it will ensure that employers have to put Australians first. At the moment they don't have to in most cases advertise or do market testing, it'll ensure that they will seek to find Australians to fill those jobs and we've taken hundreds of occupations off the skills list, off the 457 list, of course we are abolishing the 457s as you said and this will mean that there will be more jobs available for Australians but above all this is about putting Australians and their jobs first.

KIM LANDERS:

How many people will come in under the new visas because there are about 95,000 people here on 457s at the moment, so how many under these two new categories?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well there will be less and they will stay for less time. At the moment the 457s come in for four years and they are able to be renewed within Australia. Under the new arrangements there will be a short term skills visa for two years and it can only be renewed once. And then the person holding it has to go back to their home country and if their employer wants them to come back they've got to reapply from overseas. There'll be a medium term skills visa with less than 200 occupations on it so really that's more than 400 less than is currently on the 457-

KIM LANDERS:

But you're not putting any cap on the number of people that could come in under these visas?

PRIME MINISTER:

If you just let me finish, and they will come in for four years and so that is for strategic skill shortages. In terms of the absolute number of people, it will depend obviously on the demands of the economy and on skill shortages but you see we've got two objectives here; one is to ensure that wherever an

Australian is available to fill an Australian job vacancy, the Australian fills it.

The second thing is to ensure that we do not have skills gaps identified or occupations identified where there isn't a skill gap.

The third thing is to make sure that we are training Australians to do Australian jobs and we'll be saying more about the training fund arrangements in the Budget but what we want to make sure is that where there are long and enduring skill shortages in Australia, that Australians are being trained to do that work. It's all about putting Australians first, their jobs first, our values first.

KIM LANDERS:

Prime Minister if we look at some of the specific sectors. Why are cooks and chefs still on the list?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well they're on the list plainly because employers are saying they can't find Australians to do the work.

KIM LANDERS:

We can't train any Australians to do those jobs?

PRIME MINISTER:

That is exactly my point, I'm glad you raised it. That is one of the enduring skills gaps and that is where we need to make sure that our training fund is focused on and employers are focused on, training Australians to do that work.

KIM LANDERS:

Can you tell us how much companies applying to bring in foreign workers are going to have to pay into this national fund to train those Australian workers to fill skill shortages?

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes, that will all be announced in the Budget. The arrangements of the training fund will be announced in the Budget, the visa charges for the visas, you know to apply for the visas, will be around \$1200 for the two year, \$1150 for the short term stream and \$2400 for the medium term stream.

KIM LANDERS:

So on this training fund would companies have to pay a fee depending on their size?

PRIME MINISTER:

All of the details Kim will be announced in the Budget.

KIM LANDERS:

Are you going to tighten the evidence that employers have to give that they've tested the market, that they can't get Aussie workers and therefore they need a foreign worker?

PRIME MINISTER:

The labour market testing will be rigorously applied and employers will have to demonstrate that they have advertised over the previous six-month period and that they have acted, you know they have used in good faith their very best efforts to find Australians to do the work. And we'll-

KIM LANDERS:

And how are you going to check on those, sorry, how are you going to check on those failed recruitment efforts because there's previously been some criticism that that sort of market testing is very easy to evade.

PRIME MINISTER:

I know there has been, and we'll be making sure that, the Department will make sure and the Minister will make sure that the employers are held to their commitment. If they want people to come in under the replacement for the 457 Visas, under the new visas, then they have to demonstrate that their market testing has worked. And if they fail to meet their requirements, details of their failure will be published. We are going to be very transparent about this.

KIM LANDERS:

So you're going to name and shame them, but would there be financial penalties for employers who incorrectly use these two new visas?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well if, where employers breach their obligations then they won't be able to get further people in under visas. So, look, employers have a vested interest in complying with the law. Kim, this is a, I recognise that there are a lot of people who will try to criticize this on political grounds and I've heard a bit of that on the ABC already this morning, trying to treat this as a political issue. This is not about politics, this is about putting Australians first, making sure Australians get Australian jobs first and making sure we defend Australian values in doing so.

KIM LANDERS:

Well talking about the politics, the US President Donald Trump has just signed a Buy American, Hire American executive order today. Does it bother you that your announcement is being described as Trumpesque?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well this announcement has followed on a very careful policy development process going back well over a year. It's been carefully considered by Cabinet weeks ago, it's gone through all of the processes, all of our processes. So this is a carefully considered decision that has been developed and it reflects our policy of putting Australians and Australian jobs first. And you know commentators can make whatever comparisons they like but my Government is committed to putting Australians and Australian jobs first.

KIM LANDERS:

Back in March 2013 the then Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced that her Government was tightening the 457 program and you tweeted at that time that her attack on 457s strikes at the heart of skilled migration systems. So what's changed?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well look I'm glad that you're analyzing tweets from four years ago but I'm focused on governing Australia today. And I'm putting Australian jobs first, Australians for Australian jobs first. And what we have seen and we saw it particularly under the Labor government and particularly under Bill Shorten's time as Employment Minister is a shocking abuse of the temporary skilled migration program. Bill Shorten was an Olympic champion in issuing 457 Visas. Do you know, in three years, Kim I know this might be disagreeable to you but let me give you some facts. In the three years of the last term of the Gillard Government, Labor increased 457 Visa holders by two thirds. They claimed and Shorten claims today it was all about the mining boom, do you know what? Less than 10 per cent of them went into the mining sector – most went...

KIM LANDERS:

Well Prime Minister let me ask you something about your plans, let me ask you something about your plans –

PRIME MINISTER:

... Sydney and Melbourne.

KIM LANDERS:

Let me ask you something about your plans. These changes also affect the path to residency and citizenship. The Financial Review is reporting that there will be a provisional visa before someone is granted permanent residency and that would give people restricted access to social security. Is that true?

PRIME MINISTER:

Look, I'm not going to comment on that report. I'd just simply focus on the

fact that under the, the temporary the two temporary stream visas, the two-year visa and the four-year medium term visa. Under the two-year visa there is not a pathway to permanent residence. Under the four-year visa, the people can apply after they've been here for three years obviously they've then got to meet other requirements. But it is a, but what we are doing is clearly protecting Australian jobs and Australian values by ensuring that people who come in under these streams have a higher standard of English that they've obviously had a proper criminal check and that they've had work experience-

KIM LANDERS:

OK look I'm -

PRIME MINISTER:

Do you know at the moment you can get a 457 Visa without ever, that could be your first job?

So you could come from a foreign country without any work experience, come to Australia-

KIM LANDERS:

Prime Minister -

PRIME MINISTER:

Displace an Australian who is actually got work experience.

KIM LANDERS:

Prime Minister let me ask you about something else. There is a report today that an Iraqi military unit with US and Australian advisers has been hit by an Islamic State group chemical attack. How many Australians were involved?

PRIME MINISTER:

This is my, my advice right at the moment is that no Australian troops were affected by the chemical attack but Australian troops, Australian forces did provide assistance following the attack. Now that's my current advice, received literally in the last few minutes.

KIM LANDERS:

On North Korea, you've said it's time for Beijing to end this reckless threat. Are you overestimating the extent of China's influence over Pyongyang?

PRIME MINISTER:

Ah no, I'm not. I've been discussing this issue with Chinese officials for years. I've been discussing it with Chinese leaders both Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang, and the Foreign Minister Wang Yi for that matter since I've been Prime Minister. China is the country with by far the most leverage over North

Korea.

Now I recognise and the Chinese will say that Kim Jong-un is difficult to deal with, they will say that you know, that he is not somebody that they can direct or you know order around but they, I think China does find the North Korean regime frustrating. But the fact of the matter is Kim, that China has got, can if it wishes to, it can cut off North Korea's economic lifeline to the world. It has the leverage and the eyes of the world are on Beijing.

KIM LANDERS:

Okay Prime Minister –

PRIME MINISTER:

So it is on Beijing to step up and stop this reckless, dangerous regime threatening the peace of the region and the world.

KIM LANDERS:

Okay Prime Minister we're out of time, thank you very much for speaking to AM.

[ENDS]

[Radio interview with Ross Greenwood](#)

ROSS GREENWOOD:

Let's now go to Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull who is online right now, many thanks for your time Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah great to be with you.

ROSS GREENWOOD:

Can I just say the headline of this: 'Putting Australian Workers First', it did resonate something of Donald Trump in his inauguration speech, basically saying it was time to put American workers first and America first, is that what you're trying to pick up?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well we're putting Australian workers first and Australian jobs first. And I think every national leader should seek to do that. Whether you're the Prime Minister of Australia or the President of the United States so it's a commitment to protecting our national interests.

And our migration programme Ross has got to work in our national interest. It's got to deliver, obviously the immigration that we need and the skills that we need when we don't have them here, but above all its got to serve our national interest.

ROSS GREENWOOD:

Okay the Government has been in power for three and a half years, why has it taken three and a half years for the Government to act upon this when what was quite clear for some time is that it wasn't acting in the national interest before this?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well Ross, the important thing is we are getting it done now. There is always, it's always the question when you do something good, make a good reform to say 'why didn't you do it last week or last month or last year' – we are getting on with it now-

ROSS GREENWOOD:

Well, two years ago-

PRIME MINISTER:

Well obviously, two years ago I wasn't Prime Minister but the important thing is that the work has been done, it's quite a detailed exercise, there has been a lot of consultation with industry naturally, Peter Dutton has done that, Michaelia Cash, the Employment Minister, have done that – so there has been a lot of work that has gone through our very thorough process and this is a reform that will deliver the outcome we need – Australian jobs for Australian workers, migration working in the national interest but still being able to ensure that where business cannot get the skills filled by Australians at a particular time then they have got mechanisms to bring those workers in on these temporary, the new, temporary visas.

ROSS GREENWOOD:

Okay. I have noticed that Cory Bernardi today says that you're being squeezed basically by the conservatives inside your party to take such tactics – is that correct?

PRIME MINISTER:

Absolutely not. Absolutely not correct. I mean, this is a long term policy development that has been going on for some time.

As Peter Dutton observed today there was a review done on this by John Azaria some time ago.

This is, this is a very detailed exercise. It is not about politics – it's about policy. It's not about playing Canberra press gallery games – it is about delivering more jobs for more Australians. It is putting Australians

first.

The fact is that this 457 Visa lost all credibility under the Labor Party, under Bill Shorten.

Additional conditions were put on it after the Coalition came into Government in 2013, so the situation was improved under Tony Abbott's prime ministership and continuing, but what we needed to do was to have a root and branch reform and that is what we have delivered today.

ROSS GREENWOOD:

Is this an acknowledgement that many Australian families right now are struggling because of the casualisation of the Australian workforce? And the truth is that there are many families even now we know in mortgage stress simply because they cannot get the hours that they could've got perhaps two or three years ago.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well Ross, you are right that underemployment, people not being able to work the hours that they need is a big problem. Now we have added hundreds of thousands of jobs over the time.

We have wound back, over the time of the Coalition Government, we have wound back the number of 457 visa workers in Australia from about 110,000 at the time the government changed in late 2013 to 95,000 today, because basically the 457s were a four-year visa and they could be renewed so they very often ended up in a permanent migration-

ROSS GREENWOOD:

Because once a person was here for five years, they could apply for Australian Citizenship?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well they, they could certainly apply for permanent residence, yes, and citizenship and so forth. So the new arrangement, you come here on the, there is a short term skilled shortage visa which is two years and can only be renewed once. So it's two plus two and then you've got to go home. And you can apply again from home, I suppose, well you can.

And then there is a medium term visa which will be four years and the list of occupations on the medium term visa is much shorter – it's not 600 plus as it was on the 457s, it is less than 200 – and it will be, both it and the short term visas list will be updated regularly and reviewed regularly. The short term one every six months and the medium term one every 12 months to make sure that it reflects the skills shortages that exist in the country, you know, in Australia at the moment.

ROSS GREENWOOD:

You mentioned that there were 95,000 people on these 457 Visas in Australia right now-

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes, right now, there are yep.

ROSS GREENWOOD:

Have you got a target as to what you would like to see them reduced to?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, Ross, the answer is that we want to have, where a skill, where a vacancy arises, we want it to be filled by an Australian. If, however that is a position where the employer cannot find an Australian to fill that job and the skill is on the list then they are able to bring in somebody from overseas under the new arrangements. But they've got to be able to demonstrate that they've tested the market and that they cannot find an Australian.

What happened was, Labor made it – look I don't want to get into a political partisan thing but just being frank about it – Labor made this a rort, I mean, Bill Shorten had people coming out here on 457s to flip burgers at McDonalds. Now, I'm sorry, you know? I'm not-

ROSS GREENWOOD:

But wasn't that a sign of the time though Prime Minister, when we had a mining boom and we had people running off to the mines to make their fortunes, there was a shortage of burger flippers in Australia?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, no, that was not the case.

Can I tell you two thirds of the people that came in under Labor's time ended up in Sydney and Melbourne and less than 10 per cent of the additional people that came on 457s in Labor's last term in government, less than 10 per cent were involved in the mining or mining construction sectors.

So this argument that Shorten says that he was responding to the mining construction boom is not right. The facts are there.

These were not mining engineers and you know, sort of metallurgists and geologists or anything like that. This became a rort and it basically displaced a lot of Australians from entry level jobs.

I mean, under Labor and under the 457 scheme as it stands you don't even have to demonstrate that you've had work experience. Now one of the things we are doing-

ROSS GREENWOOD:

Or indeed that you haven't had a criminal check as you come into the country.

PRIME MINISTER:

Correct.

So these are the changes that we making. I mean fundamental changes.

You've got to have at least two years of relevant work experience that makes sense doesn't it?

You're going to have to demonstrate that you've got competent English and for the medium term we are raising the level of English required.

You've got to demonstrate that you've got a, you know, your criminal history check and its got to be supported by a certificate from the police from wherever you're coming.

Now these are all really important changes that protect the integrity of the migration system, ensure that the people who come here are the right people, they've got the right skills that are needed and they're not displacing Australians from jobs, particularly those entry level jobs which are so important for young Aussies to get into the workforce.

ROSS GREENWOOD:

Okay. You're a big supporter of technology, you've been there in your past as well. Mike Cannon-Brookes the boss of Atlassian, one of the real leaders in technology in Australia is a big supporter of 457 Visas and he says that his business would not be able to be based in Australia without the skills and the technology that comes from people from overseas. Do you think his business and others like that would be affected by this decision today?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well if the skill, if the skills that he needs cannot be filled by Australians then the new system will enable it to be filled from people from overseas.

But what Mike's going to have to do – and look he is a very patriotic Australian, he will do this – what he's got to do is demonstrate that he's tested the market, that he can't find Australians to do the work and I know that he will be doing everything he can to make sure that there are young Australians getting the skills, getting the training to do the work that he needs.

And we will make sure, and we'll make more announcements about this in the budget, but there will be a very significant training component in all of this to make sure that Australians get the training to do the jobs.

At the end of the day, look, migration, Ross, we are a migration nation. We're the most successful multicultural society in the world. We are proud of our migration record, our migration system but it has got to serve our

national interest. And the fundamental requirement that we have, and every other country has is to protect our own citizens. Our Australians for Australian jobs.

Now where an Aussie can't fill the job because there isn't anyone with the skills required then the system will enable someone to be brought in.

So this is going to restore integrity to the system, it's going to deliver for business but it's going to also ensure that where the job can be filled by an Australian it will be.

ROSS GREENWOOD:

OK, you've cracked down on 457 Visas. Kate Carnell, the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman says most of the rorts are happening in student visas or those on holiday visas or backpacker visas. Is that something also that you will now crack down upon?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, if by what you mean is rorts is people you know not being paid in accordance with the law-

ROSS GREENWOOD:

Oh, truck drivers who are basically known as steerers because they drive trucks on our highways in dangerous fashion-

PRIME MINISTER:

Ross, what you're talking about there is breaches of the law and the Department of Immigration, the Department of Employment and, of course, you know, law enforcement agencies in the states and territories have all got a role to play in ensuring that the law is complied with.

And as you know we have cracked down on people being underpaid in a number of fast food convenience store chains. So there is a law enforcement role here.

But the fundamental problem we've got, we've had with the 457s is that there has not been a sufficient effort to protect Australian jobs. The list of occupations was far too long. I mean, as you know it included, I mean, for example-

ROSS GREENWOOD:

Radio journalists for goodness' sake!

PRIME MINISTER:

Well radio journalists, that's right. I would have thought-

ROSS GREENWOOD:

Flying instructors were there.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes. Actor, can't get an actor apparently. Singer, apparently there's no Australian singers. Potter or ceramic artistic-

ROSS GREENWOOD:

Historians.

PRIME MINISTER:

I mean yes.

ROSS GREENWOOD:

Astonishing. Now Prime Minister wasn't on the list, I had a look Malcolm Turnbull I must admit. Just look, a final one for you.

PRIME MINISTER:

Park ranger, apparently you can't get a park ranger in Australia according to this list the Labor Party presumably-

ROSS GREENWOOD:

A betting agency manager. Anyway, we'll leave that aside.

I notice that your colleague Warren Entsch has called on the former Prime Minister Tony Abbott to quit Parliament if he cannot stop criticizing the Government. Is Warren Entsch right?

PRIME MINISTER:

Oh look I won't buy into that other than to say that every member of the Government, of the party room, has got a lot to talk about in terms of our achievements. I mean you think about it. Just think about what-

ROSS GREENWOOD:

So is Tony Abbott right in his criticisms? He was on the Ray Hadley programme on this network just the other day – he was critical of your Government, I mean, and yet he's a member of that Government. Is he right to offer those criticisms in the public forum?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I'm not sure what criticism you're referring to but I just say this to you – there's a lot of things that every member of my party room can point to the achievements that we have made.

We've secured tax cuts for middle income Australians.

We've secured tax cuts for small and medium companies.

We've secured the passage of the industrial legislation – restoration to Building and Construction Commission.

Restoring the rule of law to the union, to unions.

I mean these are big achievements and there are many others.

ROSS GREENWOOD:

He did indicate that he thinks that maybe that Bill Shorten is likely to be the next Prime Minister the way things are going.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well you know something, that's why it's really important for all of, every member of the Coalition Party to focus on the achievements of the Government, our agenda.

We have got more through the Senate – we've got more of our agenda delivered since the election than we did in the previous three years with the previous Senate.

So yes we've got a one seat majority in the House of Representatives and we certainly don't have anything like a majority in the Senate as you know but nonetheless we keep on getting things done.

We delivered our child care reforms. They'd been held up for years. We've delivered them.

We've delivered the reforms to the vocational education sector.

So you know one big reform after another, getting them through the Senate.

How many people said we'd never get any changes to company tax through? You know how important that is, how important it is for businesses to be competitive. We've got more than half of Australian employees work for businesses, small business or small and medium companies that are now going to have a tax cut as a result of those reforms. They'll have more money to invest, they'll have more incentive to employ.

These are big reforms that are driving economic growth.

And look at what we've done on energy. We've secured Snowy Hydro 2.0. Making sure that gas is available at peaking times in the summer.

My Government is delivering and so there's a lot to be proud of, a lot to talk about and obviously a lot more to do.

ROSS GREENWOOD:

Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, we appreciate your time on the programme this evening.

PRIME MINISTER:

Thanks Ross, great to be with you.

[ENDS]