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## APPEA welcomes Federal Court visa ruling

APPEA welcomes yesterday's Federal Court decision upholding the validity of a legislative instrument issued to provide certainty for offshore oil and gas construction projects using skilled overseas workers.

Maritime unions had challenged the validity of the legislative instrument, which applies to a small number of foreign workers on specialised vessels servicing offshore oil and gas construction projects.

The legislative instrument was introduced in July by the Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection in response to the Senate's disallowance of new offshore visa regulations. This disallowance has meant that offshore crews have been forced to operate under four different visa regimes in the past 10 weeks.

APPEA Chief Executive David Byers said industry needed certainty and urged all parties to accept the court's decision.

"The original changes to the offshore visa system that were subsequently disallowed by the Senate did not threaten Australian jobs, as was claimed by some – they supported Australian jobs," he said.

"Australians already comprise about 85 per cent of the workers who crew these vessels. The remainder are highly-skilled international crew members who travel around the world managing these vessels and their operations.

"Forcing companies to replace these workers with Australians when in local waters would be like forcing international airlines to replace their pilots with Australians when in our airspace.

"The oil and gas industry is currently developing around \$200 billion worth of projects in Australia and has generated 100,000 additional jobs across the economy.

"Many of these projects – and the Australians they employ – depend on the specialised work performed by these international workers.

"These workers are critical to the safe and efficient operations of vessels that perform vital services such as pipe-laying, dredging and the installation of subsea equipment.

Mr Byers said Australia had one of the most stringent offshore visa systems in the world and any changes that made it more difficult to employ temporary workers would undermine global competitiveness and ultimately put Australian jobs at risk.

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