REGIONAL BOOST FOR BUSINESS MIGRATION

More business migrants will be able to call regional Australia home under changes to business skills visa arrangements announced today by the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Philip Ruddock.

The changes which come in on 1 March 2003, seek to increase the number of business people settling in regional and low population-growth areas of Australia.

“Currently New South Wales, and Sydney in particular, receive the lion’s share of the business migrant intake,” Mr Ruddock said.

“The changes will provide State and Territory governments with more influence over the number and the skill level of business migrants who settle in their area, by enabling them to sponsor business migrants in line with their economic and regional development objectives.”

The changes include the grant of a State and Territory Government sponsored four-year provisional visa to business migrants. These people will then be eligible to apply for permanent residence after they have successfully operated a business for at least two years, and have again obtained State or Territory Government sponsorship.

“The changes were a result of close partnership between the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments and I thank the State and Territory Governments for their valuable input in developing these new arrangements,” Mr Ruddock said.

“The Tasmanian Government has endorsed the Commonwealth’s objectives, while the South Australian Government has stated its pleasure in having a new visa category providing for State or Territory Sponsored investors.

“Likewise, the Queensland Government has expressed gratitude that a direct permanent residence category has been retained for high calibre business migrants,” he said.

The changes also aim to increase the number and proportion of business migrants who are successful in getting into business.

Information received from recent surveys of business migrants is that one of the principal reasons for failure to set up a business, is the lack of information about Australia’s complex business rules and obligations.

The new system will provide improved links with State and Territory government business-related services, such as information on business licensing and taxation requirements and assistance with business plan development, providing the help that many business migrants need.

26 February 2003
MEDIA CONTACT: Steve Ingram 0419 278 715