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Event: Andrew McKellar interview with Kieran Gilbert, Sky News Afternoon Agenda.

Speakers: Andrew McKellar, chief executive Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Kieran Gilbert, host Sky News Afternoon Agenda.

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E&OE

Kieran Gilbert, host Sky News Afternoon Agenda: Let's get some more reaction now to the release of today's migration review and strategy and bring in Andrew McKellar. He's chief executive of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Andrew, do you think the government's got the right approach here in trying to sharpen up the migration system to better suit our economy?

Andrew McKellar, chief executive Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry: Good afternoon, Kieran. I think it's an excellent report and the panel I think has brought a lot of consideration and expertise. They've listened carefully to the arguments that have been put to them. So, I think from a business point of view, we can see some real benefits in a number of the recommendations that have come forward.

Kieran: Is the skilled migration list as it stands today, not fit for purpose? Does it need an overhaul?

Andrew: Absolutely. I think everybody who works in this system says that right now it's not delivering the sorts of outcomes that we need. It's not working for business, it's not working for employees, it's not working for many other stakeholders. So, it needs a fundamental redesign. I think they have gone back and addressed a number of those significant problems including a redesign of the temporary visa system to reduce some of the churn that we're getting at the moment. Focus in the areas where there are going to be real needs, and hopefully the system will work much better.

Kieran: So, opening up that permanent pathway to residency via the temporary skilled visas, that's a good thing in your mind?

Andrew: Very, very much so. So, one of the issues here is if people are going to make the commitment to come to Australia, they're going to take the time to obviously adapt to the lifestyle here. We can't have a situation where people are coming just for the short term, six months, 12 months, maybe a couple of years. We really want to give them the opportunity if it works for them, and if it works for the businesses that they're coming to, that they can then have an option to stay and continue to contribute.

Kieran: How much scope is there to grow the overall size of the economy by, as the review argues, by focusing on younger workers, highly skilled younger workers is essentially how they frame it, that the migration system should facilitate the migration of those individuals?

Andrew: Well, I do think that if we're designing the system in a proper way, restructuring it, they're proposing three levels of temporary visas. We think that there's a lot of merit in the structure that they've put forward there. By reducing some of the complexity, then clearly it will deliver better outcomes. Here, I think business is quite attracted to look at that. There's going to be some detail we will have to work through, but honestly, I think here there's a very constructive set of recommendations.

Kieran: Okay. So, thumbs up for the migration review. What about the proposal to increase JobSeeker? There's no confirmation the government is going to do this. Indications they might move on it partially. What's your overall assessment? Do you think that they need to lift JobSeeker, which stands at \$49 a day?

Andrew: This is a very difficult question and one that the government is going to have to work with very carefully. I mean, they've had this report that's been produced in the last week or so that has recommended that. I mean, that came out of an agreement with Senator Pocock. It appears on the first blush that they've ignored those recommendations. So, I imagine Senator Pocock feeling somewhat deflated or disappointed with the deal that he struck to pass that legislation. I guess let's see what happens in the budget, whether there are any changes there. It's a very difficult equation. I'm sure many people would not want to be in Jim Chalmers' shoes as he's trying to put the finishing touches on the budget.

Kieran: Yes that's true. Andrew McKellar, joining us from Brisbane, the chief executive of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Thanks so much.

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