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Media release

Orana Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA) Variation granted

8 March 2023

More than 60% of regional NSW is now covered under a newly approved Orana Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA) Variation, which is set to alleviate workforce shortages in businesses across the state.

The Orana DAMA is an agreement between RDA Orana and the Australian Government to enable employers to sponsor skilled overseas workers, for positions that they are unable to fill with local workers.

Regional Development Australia (RDA) Orana CEO, Justine Campbell said the Orana DAMA variation had been approved with an expansion of a further 41 local government areas throughout NSW and an increase to 129 occupations within the agreement.

Ms Campbell said after months of lobbying, the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon Andrew Giles MP, signed off on an approved variation request for the Orana DAMA to include four new RDA regions, more occupations and numerous concessions.

“The Orana DAMA exists to provide businesses in the regions covered, with an avenue to address current workforce shortages and to support future workforce planning,” she said.

“It is a priority for RDA Orana and the Australian Government to always promote jobs for Australians first, however a DAMA allows employers who are unable to find suitably qualified Australians to supplement their workforce with overseas workers.”

The Orana DAMA Variation includes a geographical boundary extension to include the RDA regions of Central West, Murray, Riverina and Southern Inland.

Ms Campbell said the approval marked a significant milestone in the ongoing development and growth of regional NSW to access a broader range of skilled workers.

“As part of the Orana DAMA Variation, we have also received concessions that are eligible for some occupations including English, qualifications, age and Temporary Skilled Migration Income Threshold (TSMIT).

“This is an incredible outcome for RDA Orana and regional NSW to assist with workforce shortages across the state. Thank you to Federal Member for Parkes Mark Coulton who has been instrumental in the lobbying process.”

RDA Orana Chair, Brad Cam welcomed the announcement and said there were thousands of vacancies across regional NSW with businesses unable to fill positions.

“This is a big win for the regions and I’m pleased RDA Orana will be working with our RDA counterparts who have billions of dollars worth of projects underway including Snowy 2.0, Humelink and Energy Connect, mining, manufacturing and infrastructure as well as the boom in renewables,” he said.

Effective immediately RDA Orana will remain the Designated Area Representative (DAR) with dedicated DAMA officers in each of the four RDA regions.

RDA Orana holds the only DAMA agreement in NSW, which was approved in 2019. It is now in the fifth year of operation and has been granted a 12-month extension until 3 April 2025.

Regional Development Australia Riverina Chair, Dianna Somerville said:

“The expansion of the Orana DAMA to include the RDA Riverina LGAs has remained a high priority for our region over the past few years as it faces increased workforce shortages.

“We are pleased to see that the expansion has gained the endorsement of the government and we look forward to working with the other RDA regions, industry and government in its implementation.

“The expansion of the Orana DAMA will allow Riverina businesses more options and access to more concessions for skilled migration workers.

“This piece of the workforce challenge puzzle will further support growth and development for our region and those across regional NSW.”

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