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158 foreign workers land a day

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FOREIGN workers are arriving in Australia at a rate of about 158 a day.

The flood of more than 58,000 workers holding temporary skilled work visas in the year to April comes despite **union** opposition to skilled migration as a solution to the nation's skills crisis.

According to Immigration Department figures, more than 23,000 workers came to NSW in the year to April, while 11,976 came to Victoria and 8139 to Queensland.

The resources and mining boom saw Western Australia take 13 per cent of the total intake -- about 7732 workers.

In February, the states endorsed an agreement to streamline regulations covering foreign workers brought in to meet specific short-term skill shortages.

But the states are now baulking at any further reference to the co-operation at the next Council of Australian Governments meeting on Friday week, fearing that their support contradicts federal Labor leader **Kim Beazley's** campaign against skilled migration.

The Opposition Leader has led federal Labor's campaign against increased skilled migration, claiming it drives wages down and reduces incentives to train Australians.

The Australian understands that, at a premiers' meeting on the eve of the previous COAG summit in March, NSW Premier Morris Iemma attempted to put the brakes on a move for off-shore accreditation of foreign skilled workers.

This did not meet with support from the other premiers and Mr Iemma has since taken up the issue with **John Howard**.

With the issue still unresolved, the NSW Labor Government has not decided if it will endorse the accord on skilled foreign workers.

Mr Beazley yesterday recast his opposition to skilled migration as a campaign against foreign apprentices, rather than foreign workers, in an effort to defend himself against claims of party disunity ahead of the meeting.

``I've always been for migration, what I'm not for is bringing in unskilled workers and replacing Australians in their jobs," Mr Beazley said.

``The workers being bought in to do apprenticeships in this country are taking apprenticeships away from Australian kids."

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