

Transcript: Trump Visa Ban
Innes Willox, Chief Executive Ai Group
With Peter Ryan – ABC AM Program

Presenter: Innes Willox is the chief executive of the Australian Industry Group but as a former Australian consul general in Los Angeles he has a deep understanding of US immigration policy and scrutiny in the post September 11 world.

He says the new uncertainty will add to the complexity of doing business or even travelling to the States.

Mr Willox spoke with the ABC's senior business correspondent Peter Ryan.

Willox: I heard yesterday from a member company in NSW trying to conclude a business deal in the United States, one of their staff members who was born in Iran but had moved to Australia at the age of two and had lived here for many, many years, was denied entry into the US and they were trying to conclude that deal. So it's making Australian companies much more vigilant about who they are sending to the United States and the circumstances under which they travel.

Ryan: Given the rapid implementation of President Trump's Executive Order how should Australians be gauging the potential fallout?

Willox: What Australian businesses and Australians more generally need to do is to make sure what their status is, and what the rules and guidelines are. One thing that has come up is that if a person has travelled to one of those countries that are on the list that also means that they risk not being allowed to enter the United States.

Ryan: And this is a particular issue especially for big global companies that are headquartered in Australia: BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto – they have operations in the United States and also staff on dual passports and who might end up being blocked from entering or even detained.

Willox: Well that's correct and it's the dual passport issue which is causing a lot of confusion for business because a lot of people do have two passports, and through accident of birth may be picked up. It's not for us to comment on why the American government has done this but the way it has been done, with the suddenness of the decision and its immediate effect, has caused businesses and others a fair bit of stress.

Ryan: In a former life you were Australian Consul General in Los Angeles five years or so after the 911 attacks. How do you gauge the suspicion Donald Trump has for these seven majority Muslim nations?

Willox: Well, it's an interesting question. The United States has been founded and has grown off the back of migration – that's been its strength. This is a new approach so this is going to cause a bit of anxiety among some people.

Ryan: And would the current uncertainty cause some Australian businesses to at least put their US plans on hold?

Wilcox: Well some might delay plans, particularly for immediate travel, until businesses work through the implications and ramifications of the decision.

Ryan: The Prime Minister has been criticised for not joining other leaders in speaking out against the ban saying it's not his role. Is he right not to speak out?

Wilcox: Well it's not for me to tell him whether or not he should comment but the reality is that this will have an impact on Australian trade and Australian business and Australian people-to-people links to the United States.