

G'day

Welcome to the latest edition of our monthly visa newsletter capturing all that we have seen about visa news and changes.

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Most states have now opened up for state migration, but with limited numbers, their invite rounds may not last for many more months. The hope is that there will be larger allocation of places after June 2024 when Home Affairs have processed their large backlog of applications

On to this month's news



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1) New financial criteria for student visa applications

<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2023L01349/Explanatory%20Statement/Text>

2) NSW State Migration update

Important Update: NSW will focus on priority sectors rather than skilled occupation lists to better address the evolving skills shortages across the state, NSW is shifting from publishing a list of eligible ANZSCO unit groups to a new sector-focused approach.

What's Changing

Previously, we published a skills list comprised of specific ANZSCO unit groups. Effective immediately, we're now focusing on priority sectors that need skilled talent.

NSW Target Sectors

The sectors we've identified align closely with the skills shortages in NSW and include:

- Health
- Education
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- Infrastructure
- Agriculture

Although our focus this program year is on key sectors, high-ranking EOIs submitted in non-priority sectors may also be considered; however, due to the exceptionally high demand and limited places, we strongly recommend anyone considering NSW nomination to also explore all other migration options available to them.

Skilled Invitation Rounds

Invitation rounds are an important part of the NSW nomination process. Here is what you need to know:

- **Timing:** Invitation rounds will continue to occur throughout the financial year. There are no predetermined or publicly announced dates for invitation rounds.
- **Selection:** NSW considers multiple factors when selecting EOIs. These include your points score, English language proficiency, and your skilled work experience. We will prioritise EOIs submitted in NSW Priority Sectors identified above.
- **Invitation:** Invitation for NSW nomination is at the sole discretion of the NSW Government.
- **Submission Date:** The date you submit or amend your SkillSelect EOI has no impact on your likelihood of being invited.

We intend to commence invitation rounds for the Skilled Nominated visa (subclass 190) next week.

Supporting Regional Development

Regional development remains a priority for NSW. Our regional skilled migration program is designed to help businesses in regional NSW attract qualified talent. Information about the program's reopening will be made available after we have finalised all applications from the previous financial year.

Criteria update;

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/visas-and-migration/skilled-visas/skilled-nominated-visa-subclass-190>

3) Canberra Matrix Invitation Round: 12 October 2023

<https://www.act.gov.au/migration/resources/canberra-matrix-invitation-round>

4) TRA update on skills assessments

This notice is to provide you with information about the status of the Migration Skills Assessment ('MSA'), Offshore Skills Assessment ('OSAP') and Temporary Skills Shortage ('TSS') Assessment Programs.

The increase in demand for Trades Recognition Australia ('TRA') skills assessments in MSA, OSAP and TSS has grown by over 82 per cent from 2021-22 to 2022-23 (~7,100 to ~13,000). This has resulted in increased backlogs of applications, with assessment processes sometimes exceeding the advertised timeframes.

TRA and the TRA-approved Registered Training Organisations ('RTOs') are responding to these increased caseloads by recruiting additional skills assessors, but a lack of qualified skills assessment assessors available in the market is making the process difficult.

Decision-ready documentation

Migration agents and applicants can help reduce delays by making 'decision ready' applications. Assessors need to follow up required documents that are not provided at registration. This takes time and is the main factor in assessments taking longer than advertised.

Choosing alternate RTOs

From time to time, the caseload for specific TRA-approved RTOs can fluctuate greatly, sometimes resulting in a heavy influx that can delay all assessments as they are processed.

TRA will pause the registration of new applications for specific occupations for specific TRA-approved

RTOs, to manage workloads more efficiently. Where a pause has been applied to an RTO for a specific occupation/s, alternative RTOs to register applications can be viewed on the RTO Finder tool on the TRA website at <https://www.tradesrecognitionaustralia.gov.au/rto-finder>.

More Information

For information on the MSA program, please email tramsaandmpa@dewr.gov.au. For information on the OSAP and TSS programs, please email traoutsourcedprograms@dewr.gov.au.

*** Technical Interview and Practical Assessment payment issue

TRA is aware of the current TRA Portal issue preventing the payment of fees for seven occupations.

We are currently testing a solution and should have applied it into the live environment by close of business Friday 6 October 2023

Job Ready Program Processing Times

<https://www.tradesrecognitionaustralia.gov.au/news/job-ready-program-processing-times-0>

5) South Australia State update

The South Australian Government has published the state's 2023–24 Skilled Occupation List. South Australia has moved to a Registration of Interest (ROI) process to manage strong demand from potential applicants living and working in the state against a limited allocation of nomination places. This means potential applicants must submit a ROI and be invited to apply for state nomination by South Australia. Potential applicants cannot apply for state nomination directly. Under this invitation process, South Australia will prioritise the retention of South Australia's international graduates and temporary visa holders.

Experienced overseas workers with skills in high-demand in South Australia, such as Trades and Construction, Defence, Health, Education, Natural and Physical Science and Social and Welfare Professionals will be targeted through invitations to apply for South Australian nomination. South Australia is also seeking highly skilled overseas workers who can make a strong contribution to the state's fast-growing industries and projects of national priority. This includes people with: experience working in the defence industry, and/or highly specialised skills in the digital and critical technologies sectors. International graduates and other temporary visa holders continue to be considered across a broad list of occupations consistent with previous years, while there are over 290 occupations open to offshore skilled workers.

2023–24 Business Innovation and Investment Program

South Australia is not open to applications for state nomination for the Business Innovation and Investment (Provisional) visa (subclass 188).

Business or investor migrants who already hold a provisional visa (subclass 188) can apply for nomination for the extension stream or permanent visa (subclass 888) in 2023–24 as these are not subject to a nomination cap.

Application fees

The application fees to apply for South Australian nomination in 2023–24 are published on our Application Fees page. Submitting a Registration of Interest for South Australian nomination is free of charge.

6) Global Talent visa update

In July 2022 the Home Affairs minister was quoted as saying that only offshore EOIs would be eligible for an EOI invite under the Global Talent Scheme.

The Immigration department have confirmed that ALL EOIs are now eligible for an invite under this 858 Global Talent visa as per below ...

"We confirm that all Global Talent Expressions of Interest (EOI) continue to be processed regardless of candidates' location and generally in order in which they are received. The Department of Home Affairs is currently processing EOIs lodged in April 2023"

7) WA State Migration October round

WA had an invite round on Saturday . Unofficially we saw invites in the 190 and 491 visas and in the schedule 1, 2 and graduate streams.

Occupations we saw are in the hospitality and health sectors. Also we saw random invites for Management Accountant and Motor Mechanic

Official results are likely to be posted on the WA government website on Monday

8) Visa Processing Times

Quotes from Immigration minister at press conference yesterday –

Whilst there were nearly 1,000,000 visas awaiting processing in our in-tray; and of course, it was Peter Dutton himself who oversaw a slow, complicated, and fundamentally unplanned mess when it came to people entering this country. We haven't wasted a day when it comes to both cleaning up this mess and building a system that is fit for purpose in a majority migrant nation. Whether it's through slashing the visa backlog, getting wait times down, addressing workplace shortages in key sectors or reuniting families, we're trying to work through this in a methodical and responsible way, whilst keeping an eye on future reform prospects.

Now, in terms of key visa categories, I'm very pleased to report the wait times are down across all of them. For example, a temporary skilled work visa now takes 11 days to process, down from 50 days. That's 50. Student visas are now being processed in 10 days instead of 40. Initial partner visas, which

I know are critically important to so many, are now being processed at a first stage for five months, which is nearly half the time it was a year or so ago. Now we know there is more to do. This work isn't finished, but the progress is something that's pleasing, but in particular healthcare and education workers are seeing visas.

Applications assessed in just a couple of days, which is making sure that schools and hospitals and other facilities are being appropriately staffed and today the number for partner visas wouldn't be assessed is as slow as point in recent years, which is fundamentally important for those human connections that are such a big part of our multicultural society.

9) Parent visa reform

Quotes from the Immigration Minister at press conference yesterday

Another really critical issue is the question of parent visas, and I know that many people seeking to connect with their parents are facing difficulties. I would also be clear in saying that last year we were able to deliver 8,500 parent visas compared to 4,500 in the last year of the former government. But I am aware that the wait times are very, very long, often unrealistically so, and I want to be clear also in saying that reform in this area is a priority for the government and one of the key reasons why we're focusing so hard on putting investments into the visa system and dealing with the backlog is to create space for reforms in critical areas such as this. Another one that I'm very keen on is recognising the challenges that many faith communities face in accessing faith leaders, be they a monk, an Imam or a priest to make sure that we have a system that's fit for purpose in that regard.

As I indicated in my remarks, we did grant nearly twice as many in the last program year as in the last year of the former government. But we recognised because we have so many on hand that that standing alone is not a solution, and that's why, having done the hard work of getting rid of the backlog across the board, we now have the capacity to engage very closely with community and indeed with experts about finding a solution that will ensure that we have parent visas that meet the expectations of the Australian community. Now the migration review provided some recommendations in that regard, which we are responding to in a considered manner, but we've recognised that this is an absolutely fundamental issue, both the contributory and non-contributory parent visa wait times, not where they need to be. So we need not simply to keep doing the same things that we have been doing, but to look at different policy options informed by the evidence and the views of community members. I know that this is a particularly critical issue across the Australian Indian diaspora community, amongst others so this is something that I will endeavour to keep you and your readers abreast of as we work through this policy work and a deep engagement with community as well as experts.

10) Article from the Age newspaper about Iscah Australian Migration

OPINION

How do we find migration's Goldilocks number without things turning toxic?

The next regular federal election must be held by May 24, 2025, so we are – at most – 18 months away from a campaign. And if you were to predict today where the Coalition is going to pick a fight with Labor, you would have to put immigration near the top of the list.

Peter Dutton, a hardline former immigration minister, made the country's record migration surge a key plank of his budget reply in May, noting it was occurring "at exactly the same time as a housing and rental crisis". He claimed it was the return of Big Australia by stealth. This week, the opposition called for immediate abolition of the so-called COVID visa and cuts to the international student intake. It won't be the last we hear from them on the topic.

There will always be a puddle of anti-immigrant sentiment for politicians to exploit, but the severe shortage of housing, and the resulting expense, is stirring genuine concern about migration levels. And the inevitable consequence of governments, economists and commentators talking so much about housing supply is that at some point, people will start thinking about the other side of the equation: demand.

It may, as chief political correspondent David Crowe wrote recently, turn toxic. You can see doubts about migration showing up more often in the comment sections of newspapers, for example; and while some of it is grounded in old-school racism or newfound eco-fascism, some of it is coming from reasonable people wondering whether the numbers add up.

Immigration can be a political minefield. As Dutton well knows, you ought to choose your words carefully when discussing migrants and their families. NSW Opposition Leader Mark Speakman, taking the more orthodox view of the business community that high migration levels should be maintained, proved the point this week with a clanger about Australia being unable to "securely maintain occupation" of the continent without a steady flow of migrants. Populate or perish. He later walked back his "colourful" comments.

What this does show, however, is that the Coalition is divided on how to approach the subject. And it suggests the parties' more moderate figures may not be comfortable with some of the rhetoric that is appearing, and will amplify, as the election nears.

You don't need to look far through the journals where conservative ideas percolate to get a feel for the arguments. The right-wing Spectator Australia magazine carried an article this week by Jordan Knight, "the founder of Migration Watch Australia", who indulged the dog whistle of "white flight" while saying conservatives were failing miserably on migration.

The article also contended that Labor was running a large migration program because migrants vote Labor. Never mind the fact they don't at all until they eventually become citizens, this claim has become a talking point. "This is about Labor ensuring they're in the majority," Liberal National Party MP and former cabinet minister Keith Pitt told Sky News this week during a discussion about immigration. "It's more Labor voters – that's what they're looking for."

However ugly and divorced from reality the debate may get, Anthony Albanese will have a problem because his solutions to the housing crisis, and those of his state Labor premier friends, are at best going to take years to bear fruit. At worst, they are pipedream promises that will never come to fruition. The squeeze on rents is only predicted to tighten, an inevitable function of higher demand and lagging supply.

Former Victorian premier Daniel Andrews announced an ambitious target to build 800,000 new homes in 10 years, then promptly vacated the post. That is now a problem for Jacinta Allan, who duly billed it as the biggest, most important issue for the state in her debut press conference as premier on Thursday.

There is actually a fair amount of substance to Victoria's plan, such as ditching permits for single dwellings or cutting the approval time to 10 days, putting the minister in charge of approving medium-density projects, an Airbnb levy, and residential conversions of CBD office buildings.

In NSW, where the affordability crisis is significantly worse, Premier Chris Minns spent the week dialling up his rhetoric against NIMBYs, mayors and opponents of high density across the political spectrum. Minns' target is at least 75,000 homes a year for the next five years, and we will know by Christmas where he intends to distribute those throughout Sydney and the regions.

But both states are singing from the same song sheet: we're going to build up, not out (or up and out), and councils need to help or get out of the way.

To do that, though, we need builders. Lots of them. This is where the case gets trickier for leaders to prosecute; we need more migrants to build the houses for all the people who need a place to live – including the migrants we're bringing in to build the houses. It seems self-defeating, which was exactly the point 2GB's Ben Fordham put to Minns on Friday morning.

"That's true," Minns replied. "But we've got to deal with the reality that's presented to us. There's not enough tradies in the construction sector to build the completions that we need in NSW."

The Grattan Institute has examined how the migration system contributes to our construction workforce. Its work, previously unpublished, found recent migrants are less likely to work in the construction sector than most other fields. That was especially the case for the migrant cohorts growing the fastest, such as international students and temporary graduate visa holders. New Zealanders were the biggest contingent of migrant construction workers, making up almost 5 per cent of that workforce in 2016.

"The kinds of migrant populations that are booming right now are not those that tend to work in construction," says the Grattan Institute's economic program director, Brendan Coates. "Students, they make up less than 1 per cent of the construction workforce."

The bottom line? "For every 100,000 additional migrants that come to Australia – many of whom offer big benefits to Australia in other ways – comparatively few are the kinds of workers we need to build the homes to house them."

The federal government will soon release its response to a review of the migration system led by former public service chief Martin Parkinson. The government will reportedly move to fast-track visa processes for skilled workers attracting salaries over about \$120,000 a year, but it may exclude tradies amid pressure from unions.

That's concerning, says Coates. "That pathway should be offered to all workers in any occupation, provided they earn at least \$120,000 a year, and should not be subject to labour market testing, which has proven to be a complete failure."

In a recent submission to the Senate's inquiry into rental affordability, the Grattan Institute said lowering migration would make housing somewhat more affordable in the long term, but would probably leave Australians worse off overall. Skilled migrants, for example, pay more in tax than they draw in government services, and thus bring with them a large fiscal dividend – about \$300,000 in their lifetime, the institute estimates. "That's enormous," says Coates.

Cutting family migration would just mean spouses wait in Australia on bridging visas, so they would still be here, competing for housing. The humanitarian program – refugees – is small and hardly contributes to housing pressures. Where Coates believes cuts can and should be made without too much cost is temporary migration, and that is where the government appears to be heading in its imminent response to a review of Australia's migration system.

The best things you could do, Coates says, is raise the bar for international students, pull back on the rights given to graduates to stay and work in Australia, and limit the working holidaymaker visa to one year – without the ability to extend it for working 90 days in the regions. That was also one of Parkinson's recommendations.

Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil has stressed the review is not really about "how many" people come to Australia but what kind. She says the changes the government will soon announce do not increase the migration intake; if anything, they will "reduce the size of the system a bit". That will not deter an opposition that believes it's on a winner with a campaign on immigration. Especially as the pains of higher rents and longer queues are immediate and tangible, while the fiscal dividends are distant and nebulous.

11) Western Australia State invitation results

<https://iscah.com/wa-invite-results-for-october-14th/>

12) News Articles

India's Great Student Out-Migration

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/peoplemove/indias-great-student-out-migration-0>

Coalition calls for cuts to student numbers, pandemic visa to slow migration

<https://www.watoday.com.au/politics/federal/coalition-calls-for-cuts-to-student-numbers-pandemic-visa-to-slow-migration-20230924-p5e75c.html>

What the forthcoming migration strategy won't address

<https://johnmenadue.com/what-the-forthcoming-migration-strategy-wont-address/>

Migration as a solution to aged care workforce shortages to be examined by parliamentary inquiry

<https://neoskosmos.com/en/2023/09/26/news/australia/migration-as-a-solution-to-aged-care-workforce-shortages-to-be-examined-by-parliamentary-inquiry/>

Tradie migration solution needed to meet renewable energy target: union, industry

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/tradie-migration-solution-needed-to-meet-renewable-energy-target-union-industry-20230920-p5e68p.html>

'Party's over for rorters': Government cracks down on visa scams

<https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/party-s-over-for-rorters-government-cracks-down-on-visa-scams-20231001-p5e8w6.html>

Labor to ban agents being paid for poaching international students amid wider crackdown

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/oct/02/international-student-poaching-crackdown-australia-labor-ban-agents-paid>

Australia is leaving thousands of international graduates in visa limbo, and it's about to get worse

<https://theconversation.com/australia-is-leaving-thousands-of-international-graduates-in-visa-limbo-and-its-about-to-get-worse-214471>

We must tighten graduate visa rules to reduce population pressures

<https://www.watoday.com.au/politics/federal/we-must-tighten-graduate-visa-rules-to-reduce-population-pressure-20230929-p5e8p3.html>

It's been a week of major migration changes. Here are the key takeaways

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/its-been-a-week-of-major-migration-changes-here-are-the-key-takeaways/tb1v7tlfh>

Questions loom over mooted parent visa reforms

<https://independentaustralia.net/politics/politics-display/questions-loom-over-mooted-parent-visa-reforms,17967>

Ok folks

That's all for this month, stay safe

See you all on Monday 20th November 2023
(My bday).



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