

Hey

Hope you had a good few weeks and welcome to the latest edition of our monthly newsletter

Good news that the migration program will remain strong to address our skills shortages at 185,000

Pity to see the opposition leader to play the anti migrant leading up to next years election, but true to form.

On to this month's news...



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1) Victoria state news

Victoria's 2023-24 state nominated skilled visa program will close to new Registrations of Interest (ROI) at 5pm AEST on Tuesday, 23 April 2024.

In 2023-24 the Australian Government allocated Victoria 3,300 skilled visa places, including 2,700 for the subclass 190 visa and 600 for the subclass 491 visa. About 3,200 of these nominations have been used.

We will continue to assess submitted ROIs for any remaining nomination places in the 2023-24 program year.

2) Lower English required for student visas for some student courses

<https://www.legislation.gov.au/F2024L00471/latest/text/explanatory-statement>

3) Queensland State Migration closed

On Friday 10 May 2024, Migration Queensland has closed its state nominated skilled program for FY23-24.

If you have received an invitation, please upload your documents as soon as possible.

If you have not been selected this financial year, you can submit a new EOI once our program opens for the 2024-25 program year.

This year's program was highly competitive, as Queensland received 40,000 EOIs for a nomination allocation of 1,550 places.

Please note: Migration Queensland continues to process second stage business visa nominations.

4) 482 company sponsored changes

To make skilled migration easier for certain professions, work experience requirements for the temporary skill shortage visa (sub-class 482) will be reduced from two years to one from November this year.

(Source: Financial review newspaper)

The Government will also reduce the work experience requirement for the Temporary Skill Shortage (subclass 482) visa from two years to one year for ALL applicants from 23 November 2024 onwards, with an unquantifiable increase in receipts and payments over four years from 2024–25.

The Government will implement a new National Innovation visa, replacing the current Global Talent visa (subclass 858) from late 2024, to target exceptionally talented migrants who will drive growth in sectors of national importance. The Business Innovation and Investment visa program (BIIP) will cease, with refunds of the visa application charge provided from September 2024 for those who wish to withdraw their BIIP application. The measure includes \$1.4 million in 2024–25 for necessary system changes for the implementation of a new visa and closure of the BIIP.

5) Migration Program numbers announced

189s down to 16,900

State numbers slightly increased to 33,000 each for 190 and 491

6) VETASSESS news

Reopening new applications for Cook, Diesel Motor Mechanic and Motor Mechanic (General)
On April 23, VETASSESS will resume accepting new applications for three trade occupations which were paused September 2023:

- Cook, ANZSCO Code 351411
- Diesel Motor Mechanic, ANZSCO Code 321212
- Motor Mechanic (General), ANZSCO Code 321211

From April 23, VETASSESS will implement a number of changes to the trades skills assessment process. These changes will apply to new applications lodged from that date.

Change in how applications are lodged

When you apply for a skills assessment, we will review the information and documents you provided to ensure we have enough evidence for your assessment. Once we have confirmed your application is 'assessment ready', we will accept your application and advise how to pay the assessment fee.

The change means you will only have to pay for an assessment once we have confirmed that it is 'assessment ready'.

Changes for Pathway 1 trade applicants

We are also changing the assessment process for Pathway 1 applications for all trades, except Airconditioning and Refrigeration Mechanic, Electrician (General), Electrician (Special Class) and Plumber (General).

Stage 2 of the assessment process will now involve three steps:

1. Video Evidence

When submitting your Stage 2 application, you will need to provide a selection of videos demonstrating your trade skills. You can find the instructions about what types of skills to capture in your videos and how to record them in the Video Guide for your nominated occupation provided on our website. An updated Video Guide for all trades will be available on April 23. The assessor will review your videos and will ask you to resubmit them if they do not meet the requirements.

2. Australian Industry Standards Online Assessment

You will need to complete a short online course about Australian industry standards relevant to your trade. At the end of the course, you will need to complete an assessment of your understanding of these standards.

You will have seven days to complete the assessment and can repeat the modules if required.

You will receive an email with a username and password for the online course once your Stage 2 application has been accepted and payment confirmed.

3. Technical Interview

Once the online assessment is successfully completed and video evidence requirements are met, we will be able to book your technical interview.

The interview will be conducted either over the internet, or face-to-face at one of our assessment venues. It will take about two hours.

For further information, read the Pathway 1 Technical Assessment Guide or contact us at tradeassess@VETASSESS.com.au.

7) Trades Recognition Australia (TRA)

From 1 April 2023, the need for the following automotive trades from qualified applicants/countries of passport were removed from having to have their skills mandatorily assessed through the Offshore Skills Assessment Program (OSAP). Applicants are now able to have their skills assessed through the Migration Skills Assessment (MSA) program.

This change means that the applicants have the option of a less expensive documentary evidence only assessment and removes the need to complete an additional technical assessment. It is important to note that applicants must have a qualification relevant to the chosen occupation.

- Automotive Electrician 321111 – China, Ireland, Sri Lanka and United Kingdom
- Diesel Motor Mechanic 321212 - China, Ireland, Sri Lanka and United Kingdom
- Motor Mechanic 321211 - China, Ireland, Sri Lanka and United Kingdom
- Panelbeater 324111 - Ireland, Sri Lanka and United Kingdom
- Vehicle Painter 324311 – China, Ireland, Sri Lanka and United Kingdom

Please check with the Department of Home Affairs (www.homeaffairs.gov.au) before submitting your application, to confirm a skills assessment is required for your visa application, and that TRA is the correct assessing authority for your nominated occupation.

8) Unis ban Indian student applications as visa rejections hit record high

Universities are blocking applications from students from entire countries as the federal government's latest stage in its migration crackdown makes it even tougher for some institutions to recruit foreign pupils.

Some universities, including at least one prestigious Group of Eight institution, have taken the drastic step of banning or limiting applications from countries deemed at high risk of visa refusal, including India and Nepal.

Vice chancellors from smaller universities say the processing of visas has been highly unpredictable and has unfairly targeted them.

Since late last year, the government has prioritised visa applications for the least risky institutions as a way of weeding out foreigners using the student visa system as a back door to the job market. The measure is central to the government's goal of slashing migration.

The federal government earlier this month updated its risk rankings (also known as evidence levels) – one being the lowest risk and three the highest – of Australian higher education providers, with 10 universities moving to a higher risk level.

In a letter to education agents, top-tier institution Adelaide University said it would only accept undergraduate applications from Indian students aged under 20, or under 22 if they have previous study credits.

It also banned applications from any Indian student who had a previous visa refusal from Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand or the United Kingdom, among other restrictions.

Central Queensland University, which is a level two provider, this month wrote to education agents saying it would no longer offer English language programs to students from India and Nepal.

In addition, it would not offer any enrolments to offshore Indian and Nepalese applicants who are over 25, and/or married (except for research students).

"We need to take these steps now rather than later to give us the best chance to manage our evidence level," the letter read.

Edith Cowan University, which maintained its level two rating, emailed education agents saying it will not accept Indian, Nepalese or Pakistani students into its English or academic pathways programs due to increased scrutiny from Home Affairs.

Affiliated Edith Cowan College has also emailed agents saying it can no longer accept applications from Pakistani and Indian nationals for some diploma courses.

A high rate of visa rejections contributes to a higher risk rating, resulting in universities restricting applications from students deemed a higher risk of visa refusal.

While top-tier universities can recruit students from high-risk countries like India through a streamlined process, tier two and tier three universities are required to go through more complex checks for those students.

The changes to foreign student approvals come as the latest Home Affairs data shows offshore student visa refusals are at a record high, with approvals sitting at a record low of 78.4 per cent in the 12 months to March.

Ravi Singh, managing director of Indian-based education agency Global Reach, said he believed institutions such as Central Queensland University were taking the stringent measures after just avoiding moving to a higher risk level this month.

"I am expecting more to do the same," he said. "I strongly believe that students should be encouraged to choose the University based on their academic delivery and suitability to the student. The current system forces the students to choose the Universities based on ease in securing the visa."

Western Sydney University, which at the start of semester moved to cancel student enrolments to minimise visa rejections, had its risk ranking slip from a top-tier provider to level two this week.

The university did not respond to questions asking if it had been forced to restrict enrolments based on nationality or other demographic, but said an increase in visa rejections had impacted students who wished to start study this semester.

The University of New England, based in regional NSW, had its rating drop from level 2 to the lowest level 3.

Vice chancellor Professor Chris Moran said the federal government's actions were having a significant impact on the institution's ability to recruit international students.

"The changes to visa assessment have a disproportionate impact on smaller universities," he said.

Murdoch University's pro vice-chancellor international, Kelly Smith, said the government had shown an arbitrary approach to its visa decisions.

"We therefore do not see a shift in the evidence level being a challenge, but rather some of the more arbitrary decisions being made in respect to individual applicants who we have thoroughly screened," he said.

A Charles Sturt University spokesperson said the university actively adjusts its genuine student screening based on evidenced trends and advice from the Department of Home Affairs, and was concerned about current approaches to visa processing.

"We are ... calling on the government to fundamentally review the current provider-risk based model and create a level and fair playing field for all students and providers," they said.

"Visa processing has become highly unpredictable, with refusal rates for the higher education sector the highest they have been in at least 20 years."

Naresh Gulati, former international student and chief executive of education agent management system Ascent One, said it should not be the responsibility of universities to assess the genuine nature or financial viability of overseas applicants.

"I find it quite unfortunate that the providers have to, once again, go into the fire-fighting mode," he said.

"The whole provider rating system needs to be scrapped as it sends a negative signal, in the market, about the reputation of the provider."

Adelaide University said the restrictions on applications were in response to the government's new genuine student requirements.

"The University of Adelaide has consistently maintained a low-risk status (level one) as a result of its rigorous checks on applications undertaken by our agency partners in India," a spokesperson said.

A Central Queensland University spokesperson said in addition to managing its risk rating, it had a moral obligation to ensure prospective students had the best opportunity to successfully obtain a student visa.

A spokesman for Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil said the government was working with the sector to assist providers navigating the changes.

"However we make no apologies for bringing forward the reform which is necessary to protect the integrity and reputation of the system," he said.

(newspaper article from Sydney Morning Herald)

9) Changes to the Temporary Graduate visa program – proposed 1 July 2024

<https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/temporary-graduate-485/changes>

10) The new Core Skills occupation list was published for comment recently

Here are some FAQs about what that list means for you;
<https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/topics/migration-strategy/draft-core-skills-occupations-list-csol-consultation>

11) A reminder about the various english tests that are acceptable and some clauses ..

From 14 December 2022, IELTS One Skill Retake (OSR) will be available for certain test takers. OSR allows test takers to retake one of the four test components in either reading, writing, speaking or listening (once only).

For Australian visa purposes, the Department will accept IELTS test results that include OSR, with the exception of applications for subclasses 476, 482, and 485, which need scores from a single sitting/attempt.

From 12 February 2024, only results from the paper-based Cambridge C1 Advanced test (previously known as Cambridge English: Advanced CAE) will be accepted for Australian visa and migration purposes.

Test scores for both C1 Advanced paper-based and computer-based tests, taken before 12 February 2024, within the specified validity period (see relevant eligibility pages linked below), are still accepted.

TOEFL iBT tests that were completed between 26 July 2023 and 4 May 2024 will not be accepted for Australian visa and migration purposes. During this period, the TOEFL iBT test being offered was not an approved test.

12) New Student Financial criteria from 10th May 2024

The Government is also further increasing the amount of savings international students will need in order to get a student visa. This was increased from \$21,041 to \$24,505 on 1 October last year to account for indexation since it was frozen in 2019 and will now further increase to \$29,710. These changes will come into effect on Friday 10 May 2024.

<https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/news-media/archive/article>

13) Student numbers to be capped at each University/College

Article from Saturday's Australian newspaper

In a move to cut migration, the Albanese government will limit the influx of international students by capping the number of new students enrolling at each university or college. The measure is aimed at neutralising before the next election the political damage the government is suffering from high migration rates.

It will particularly impact the big five universities – Sydney, Melbourne, NSW, Monash, and Queensland – which are still enrolling large numbers of international students despite the government's deliberate slowdown in student visa processing – which started in December – in an effort to reduce Australia's record net migration rate.

But the big universities have dodged their worst nightmare of a hard cap on student numbers. The new measure is a softer cap that will allow institutions to negotiate a higher cap if they build new student accommodation for domestic as well as international students, easing pressure on the rental market. The government also intends to negotiate with universities and colleges to limit the number of international students enrolled over a particular period.

The cap on international students will be in legislation that will go to parliament in the coming week and which will also crack down on shonky vocational colleges that have exploited gaps in international student regulations.

Labor's bill will also stop colleges from owning education agent businesses, pause the registration of new international education providers, require new providers to have a track record of quality education for domestic students before enrolling international students, and prevent colleges under serious regulatory investigation from enrolling new students

The government will also prevent education agents from taking commissions on international students who transfer between education providers in Australia.

The government's decision to press ahead with placing limits on international student numbers is a setback for the international student sector, which has been fighting for months against the campaign by Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil to use caps as a nuclear option to rapidly reduce the politically sensitive migration rate.

But the soft cap will be seen by the industry as better than the alternative of a rigid limit on student numbers.

Education Minister Jason Clare said the changes were "designed to ensure the integrity, quality and ongoing sustainability" of Australia's international education sector.

The University of Sydney is seen as a particular target of the new policy. It has used favourable rules applying to universities with low visa risk to massively expand its international student intake this year. Sydney had more than 13,000 visas issued for international students who started in the first semester this year compared to about 8000 last year.

The federal budget is also understood to include plans for a discussion paper examining the critical shortage of student housing. Sources said the discussion paper would examine options to alleviate housing stress and the role of universities in addressing the crisis.

The announcement comes after months of mounting political pressure on Labor to address the housing shortage, which has been blamed on record numbers of international students.

In the budget, Mr Clare is also widely expected to announce the rollout of fee-free preparatory courses to assist students to study at university by preparing them for entry, as was recommended in the Universities Accord.

14) The migrant boost: How immigrants to Australia are lifting wages

Migrants coming to Australia boost productivity and lift the wages of all locals, especially those with fewer skills or less education, international research into the nation's immigration intake has revealed.

Amid a growing debate about immigration after a record number of people entered the country over the past 12 months, four separate research papers by the OECD show parts of Australia with higher inflows of migrants gain an economic benefit of almost \$1500 a person.

Net overseas migration reached a record 518,100 people in the 12 months to the end of September, taking overall population growth to 2.4 per cent, the highest percentage in half a century.

More than 174,000 net overseas migrants called NSW home during the year, most of whom moved to Sydney, while Victoria accounted for another 154,000 people, with Melbourne their city of choice.

The surge in migration, driven largely by international students returning to complete their COVID-interrupted studies, has been blamed for the tight rental market with vacancy rates at or below record levels across every major capital.

The new OECD research – based on the payroll records of 27 million people collated between 2011 and 2018 during which a net 1.7 million migrants moved into Australia – found those parts of the country with higher migrant numbers tended to have higher productivity levels.

That enhanced productivity was driven, in part, by the migrants moving into those regions. The OECD found almost 60 per cent of Australia's migrants had tertiary education compared to about 40 per cent of the local-born population. Migrants to Australia had much higher levels of tertiary education than those in other countries.

The organisation's researchers found that, on average, a one percentage point higher share of migrants was associated with higher productivity worth \$1490 per person.

A one percentage point increase in annual migrant numbers boosts the employment levels of locally born Australians by 0.53 per cent. It did not seem to have a difference across the skill levels or age groups of the local-born.

"The arrival of migrants boosts native geographical mobility, resulting in higher regional employment of natives," it found.

"The positive effect of migration on native employment is mainly driven by a substantial inflow of natives who were previously employed or unemployed in other regions."

One of the most contested issues around immigration is whether it puts downward pressure on the wages of those people already in the country. In 2021, then Reserve Bank governor Philip Lowe said high migration was one of the factors for Australia's low wages growth.

The OECD found those areas with larger migrant share tend to have wages around 1.3 per cent higher than those with an average level of migrants.

It also found that as the migrants had higher levels of productivity, that helped boost the wages of lower-income locals more than higher-educated people.

"This paper finds that Australian regions with larger shares of migrants tend to have higher regional wages, which provides evidence of a positive link between migration and labour productivity," it said. "Moreover, lower-skilled natives benefit slightly more from migration than higher-skilled natives." The OECD research, however, notes that as the nation's capital cities are more likely to attract migrants, they are better placed to enjoy the productivity and wage boost associated with newcomers. It also found that despite their high levels of education, migrants have lower employment rates relative to the native-born population. It said this "untapped potential" was largely due to female migrants. "The gap mainly arises from a low labour market participation of migrant women," it found. The OECD research did not examine the impact of immigration on the nation's housing market or its infrastructure needs.

Research released on Sunday by the right-leaning Institute of Public Affairs found that during 2023 Australia absorbed the largest number of net migrants on record. The number of new migrants as a proportion of the total population, at 1.67 per cent, was double the post-World War Two average. Institute deputy executive Daniel Wild said an unprecedented migration intake was placing immense pressure on housing and infrastructure without solving the nation's worker shortage. "Migration has and will continue to play a critical role to our national social fabric and economy, but failure to undertake proper planning has directly driven housing shortages, household cost of living increases and has placed pressure on our education, health, and welfare systems," he said.

(Source Sydney Morning Herald newspaper)

15) Migration Program set at 185,000

Only a small drop from 190k to 185k in the migration program for 2024/25 has been announced in the Federal Budget

Details so far

The Government will set the 2024–25 permanent Migration Program planning level at 185,000 places and allocate 132,200 places (around 70 per cent) to the Skill stream. From 2025–26, the Government will extend the planning horizon for the permanent Migration Program from one year to four years. Maintaining around 70 per cent of places for the Skill stream will help address Australia’s long-term skill needs. Extending the planning horizon for the permanent Migration Program from one year to four years will enable better cross-government planning in the future.

The Government is reforming Australia’s migration system to drive greater economic prosperity and restore its integrity, implementing actions outlined in the Migration Strategy. This Budget supports skills in demand, with around 70 per cent of the permanent Migration Program allocated to skilled visa categories. The Government will also introduce a new National Innovation visa to attract exceptionally talented migrants and replace the Global Talent visa and the Business Innovation and Investment visa. These actions complement reforms being developed for the points test used for certain skilled visas.

The actions underway as part of the Migration Strategy are delivering a better managed migration system. Government actions are estimated to reduce net overseas migration by 110,000 people over the forward estimates from 1 July 2024. Net overseas migration is forecast to approximately halve from 528,000 in 2022–23 to 260,000 in 2024–25.

Net overseas migration 528,000 (22/23) 395,000 (23/34) 260,000 (24/25) 255,000 (25/26)
235,000 (26/27) 235,000 (27/28)
190 Program 33,000 (last year 30,400)
491 Program 33,000 (last year 32,300)

MATES will provide a new mobility pathway for 3,000 Indian graduates and early career professionals (aged 18 to 30 years at the time of application), with knowledge and skills in targeted fields of study to live and work in Australia for up to two years. The visa will have a pre-application (ballot) charge of \$25 and an application charge of \$365, both of which will be indexed to the consumer price index in future years. This measure is part of the Australia-India Migration and Mobility Partnership Arrangement (MMPA).

16) News

Points test system for skilled migrants set for overhaul

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/points-test-system-for-skilled-migrants-set-for-overhaul/8r9ac9wlj>

Review of the points test - Discussion Paper – April 2024

<https://l.facebook.com/l.php>

Why its time to stop blaming international students for housing crisis

<https://www.realestate.com.au/news/why-its-time-to-stop-blaming-international-students-for-housing-crisis/>

Coalition to campaign on balancing housing construction and migration, says Andrew Bragg

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/coalition-campaign-balancing-housing-construction-080119726.html>

Coalition defends migration cut, Labor spruiks its own

<https://www.northweststar.com.au/story/8633951/coalition-defends-migration-cut-labor-spruiks-its-own/>

Australia stops 'golden visa' scheme, aims to draw 'exceptionally talented migrants'

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3262829/australia-stops-golden-visa-scheme-aims-draw-exceptionally-talented-migrants>

The immigration debate: smoke, mirrors and a dash of xenophobia

<https://johnmenadue.com/the-immigration-debate-smoke-mirrors-and-a-dash-of-xenophobia/>

Dutton readies budget reply as Chalmers links migration cut to inflation fight

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/dutton-readies-budget-reply-chalmers-150043053.html>

The federal budget shows Australia's net migration intake will fall sharply — but some say it's outside the government's control

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-05-15/federal-budget-immigration-reduction-intake-ballot/103839856>

Immigration and the housing crisis

<https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/economy/2024/05/11/immigration-and-the-housing-crisis>

'It's very unfair': Australia's visa crackdown is disrupting international students and hitting university finances

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/very-unfair-australia-visa-crackdown-020003487.html>

Albanese promises net migration fall to pre-pandemic levels

<https://www.themandarin.com.au/236342-albanese-promises-net-migration-fall-to-pre-pandemic-levels/>

Draft International Education Framework

<https://l.facebook.com/l.php>

ANMF welcomes new support payments for student nurses & midwives

<https://www.anmf.org.au/media-campaigns/media-releases/anmf-welcomes-new-support-payments-for-student-nurses-midwives/>

Poll suggests migrants, refugees feel unfairly blamed for Australia's rental crisis

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/poll-suggests-migrants-refugees-feel-unfairly-blamed-for-australias-rental-crisis/jo29pv65c>

Greens say migration 'not the main cause' of Australia's housing crisis

<https://thewest.com.au/business/greens-say-migration-not-the-main-cause-of-australias-housing-crisis-c-14602704>

Australia announces changes in Temporary Graduate Visa rules

<https://www.financialexpress.com/business/investing-abroad-australia-visa-reforms-aligning-skills-for-a-stronger-workforce-3485947/>

Crackdown on foreign uni students as migration numbers revised upwards again

<https://www.news.com.au/finance/economy/federal-budget/crackdown-on-foreign-uni-students-as-migration-numbers-revised-upwards-again/news-story/410936c9c998ae8856bf1b8ede61f545>

Ok folks

That's all for this month, stay safe

See you all on Monday 17th June 2024.



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