

AMBER MIGRATION NEWSLETTER

4 April 2019

In this special Newsletter, we outline the major measures in the 2019-2020 Budget that will directly impact the users of the visa/sponsorship programs.

New regional Visa Categories

In the lead up to the 2019-2020 budget, a range of new visa subclasses were announced to attract more visa applicants to regional Australia. The main features of these visas are outlined below:

Skilled Employer Sponsored (Provisional)

- Available from 1 November 2019;
- Approximately 700 eligible occupations (450 more than metro areas);
- 9,000 places allocated for this financial year.

Skilled Work Regional (Provisional)

- Available from 1 November 2019;
- Approximately 500 eligible occupations (70 more than metro areas);
- 14,000 places allocated for this financial year.

Both visa categories will receive priority processing and be valid for 5 years.

Permanent Residence (Skilled Regional) Visa

- Available from November 2022;
- Eligible after 3 years living and working in a regional area; and
- Must hold either the Skilled Employer Sponsored (Provisional) or Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) visa.

As a result of the above, the Regional Sponsor Migration Scheme (Subclass 187) and Skilled Regional (Provisional) (Subclass 489) visas will be closed to new applications from 1 November 2019. Subclass 187 and 489 applications lodged before 1 November 2019 will ***continue to be processed per the regulations in place at the time of lodgement.***

Extension of Temporary Graduate (Subclass 485) Visa for Regional Graduates

- Available from 2021;
- Will enable eligible visa holders to apply for a second one-year visa for a total of 3 years;
- Must have maintained residence in regional area as for first Temporary Graduate (Regional) visa;
- Must have studied at a regional campus; and
- Must have graduated with either a higher education or post graduate qualification.

Destination Australia Program

Scholarships will be made available for both domestic and international students to study in regional Australia for higher education or vocational education qualifications. Further details are awaited.

Skilled Migration Points Test

From November 2019, the points test for the Subclass 189 and 190 visas will be adjusted to award additional points to primary applicants, whose accompanying partners have competent English, but cannot otherwise meet the requirements for Skilled Partner points. Single applicants will also be awarded additional points to ensure they are not disadvantaged. Further details are to be released.

Government Fee Increases and SAF (Skilling Australians Fund) Levy

Base visa application fees for all visas (except the Subclass 600 Visitor) **will increase 5.4% from 1 July 2019**. There will be no increase to the English language charges (2nd VAC).

The Government forecasted that the SAF levy will now collect up to \$126 million *less* in the 4 years to 2022-23. This reflects a reduced demand for employer sponsored visas – possibly impacted by the levy amounts. The decreased SAF revenue may have contributed to the visa fee increases which exceed annual CPI levels. At a recent meeting with our industry body (Migration Institute of Australia), the Department of Home Affairs did however advise they were considering a request to move payment of the SAF to time of decision rather than lodgement.

Citizenship Reforms

No announcements were made regarding the citizenship reforms previously proposed by the Government. At this stage, applications continue to be assessed under the existing regulations and there is no date set for when the proposed reforms may again be tabled before Parliament.

Migration Program Planning Levels

The government have announced that the overall inbound migration level will be capped at 160,000 for each of the next four years. The table below provides a breakdown of the Skilled Stream of the program with 2017-18 comparisons (2018-19 figures are not available):

	2017-18	2019-20
Employer Sponsored	35,528	30,000
Skilled Independent	39,137	18,652
State / Territory Nominated	27,400	24,968
Skilled Regional	1,574	n/a
Skilled Employer Sponsored (Provisional) new	n/a	9,000
Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) new	n/a	14,000
Business Innovation and Investment program	7,260	6,862

The Amber team will continue to provide updates to clients as further information is released.

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