



Australian High Commission

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australian temporary skilled migration reforms

Migration is vital to Australia's economic growth and prosperity. Ongoing success in migration management requires constant recalibration to ensure the best outcomes for Australians and migrants alike.

On 18 April 2017, the Australian Government announced changes to our employer sponsored temporary skilled work visa arrangements. Most significant was the announcement that the current visa for temporary skilled workers (the 457 visa) will be replaced by a new Temporary Skill Shortage (TSS) visa in March 2018.

The TSS visa programme will be comprised of two streams: a short-term stream allowing entry for up to two years, and; a medium-term stream allowing entry for up to four years.

The changes are designed to ensure Australia can continue to benefit from the contributions temporary skilled workers have made to the Australian economy over many years. There will continue to be extensive opportunities for such individuals.

The TSS visa will replace the 457 visa as the primary visa used to meet Australia's trade commitments on the entry of temporary skilled workers under the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services and Free Trade Agreements.

While labour market testing will be applied to the TSS visa, it will not apply where inconsistent with trade obligations, reflecting current practice with the 457 visa.

The TSS visa will ensure that the Temporary Skilled Migration programme better meets Australia's skills needs, and increase the quality and economic contribution of skilled migrants.

Separately, from 19 April 2017, the occupation list under the existing 457 programme is being reduced to remove occupations that are either generally restricted to Australian citizens, have had little or no applications from overseas workers or because of Australian labour market considerations. The 457 occupation list has changed in the past, is designed to change and is subject to ongoing review. Occupations subject to commitments in free trade agreements are not impacted by changes to the occupation list.

In the medium-term stream only, English language requirements will increase to a minimum score of five across all components of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (or equivalent test).

The current 457 visa English language requirement will apply to the short-term stream: an overall average IELTS (or equivalent test) score of five, with a minimum score of at least 4.5 in each component.

English language requirements ensure that migrants are less vulnerable to exploitation and are able to participate fully in the workforce and community.

Eligibility criteria for both streams of the TSS visa will include work experience of at least two years to improve the quality of the skilled migrants entering the Australian workforce. This requirement is not inconsistent with Australia's trade obligations.

For permanent employer sponsored skilled visa programmes the permanent residence eligibility period will be extended from two years to three years. Applicants will be required to demonstrate three years' relevant work experience and the training requirement for employers to contribute towards training Australian workers will be strengthened.

Further information on these reforms is available on the website of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP): www.border.gov.au/Trav/Work/457-abolition-replacement. Current 457 requirements are explained on DIBP's website at: www.border.gov.au/Trav/Visa-1/457-.