



Hiya

Welcome to a buzzing newsletter about the changes coming up for Australia's visa program. Has been a real busy month and destined to continue with fine tuning as Australia battles to address the skills shortages with the right mix of skilled migration.

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On to the latest news ..

Contents

- 1) Annual changes to Skilled List
- 2) WA State Migration
- 3) New Zealanders pathway to PR
- 4) Changes to Passmark for EOI
- 5) WA State GSM Sponsorship
- 6) New DIAC Fees from 1st July 2012
- 7) New Business Skills Visas
- 8) Demise of subclass 845
- 9) DIAC Processing Times

1) Annual changes to Skilled List (SOL)

The Skilled Occupation List (SOL) will change from 1 July 2012, with four occupations to be added to the list and four occupations to be removed. The SOL determines which occupations are eligible for independent and family sponsored skilled migration.

The updated SOL is based on expert advice from the independent body, Skills Australia. The list of occupations reflects the Australian Government's commitment to a skilled migration program that delivers skills in need in Australia. The SOL will continue to deliver a skilled migration program tightly focused on high value skills that will assist in addressing Australia's future skills needs.

The updated SOL will apply to all new independent (unsponsored) and family sponsored skilled migration applications lodged on or after 1 July 2012 unless they are from applicants eligible for transitional arrangements.

Applications lodged before 1 July 2012 with a nominated occupation that is no longer on the SOL in effect from 1 July 2012 will continue to be processed. Priority processing arrangements may however change for certain applicants according to the Ministerial Direction on priority processing.

Additions to the SOL

133513 Production Manager (Mining)
234912 Metallurgist
251411 Optometrist
263111 Computer Network and Systems Engineer

Removals from the SOL

234211 Chemist
252711 Audiologist
331111 Bricklayer
333411 Wall and Floor Tiler

The update of the SOL will not apply to applicants eligible for transitional arrangements which allow anyone who either held or had applied for a Skilled – Graduate (Subclass 485) visa on or before 8 February 2010 to apply for a permanent skilled migration visa on the basis of the SOL in effect on 8 February 2010.

Transitional arrangements also allow anyone who held a qualifying Student visa on 8 February 2010 to apply for a Temporary Skilled – Graduate (Subclass 485) visa on the basis of the SOL in effect on 8 February 2010. These transitional arrangements are in place until 31 December 2012.

(Source: DIAC)

2) WA State Sponsorship for RSMS visas

The West Australian Government at first closed any new State sponsorship applications under subclass 119/857 on the 8th June 2012, through to 30th June 2012. They have now changed this decision and reopened to all company sponsorship requests.



Below is their latest announcement which says you can lodge, but won't be processed until after 30th June 2012. That is ok for most visa applicants as this will allow a 119/857 visa lodgement under the current (easier) rules before 30th June 2012.

Transitional arrangements under Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme from 8-30 June 2012

Applications to Skilled Migration Western Australia (SMWA) for certification under the Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS) lodged after 8 June 2012 will not be assessed before 30 June 2012.

It is possible to apply for certification with SMWA on 8-30 June 2012 if you intend on lodging a nomination with Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) during this time. DIAC will accept nominations with a receipt of lodgement from SMWA.

These applications will only be assessed by SMWA after 30 June 2012, with proof of lodgement with DIAC. The criteria of the time of lodgement with both DIAC and SMWA will apply.

For more information please contact DIAC on 131881.

(Source: DTWD)

3) New Zealanders pathway to Permanent Residence

New Zealand citizen passport holders used to have a very clear pathway to permanent residence and Australian citizenship prior to legislation changes in February 2001. At that time changes were introduced that allowed most NZ citizens to live unlimited periods of time in Australia and work here, but took away the safety net of future Australian citizenship as an easy option. Also it has caused similar uncertainty for NZ family members being sponsored.

We believe the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet is currently reviewing the status for such NZ citizens with the possibility that more beneficial pathways to Permanent Residence/ Citizenship may be made available.

4) Changes to Passmark for EOI system

The pass mark for the new SkillSelect visa subclasses 189, 190 and 489 will be 60 points. Intending migrants will first need to submit an expression of interest (EOI) and be invited to make an application for these visas.

A Department of Immigration and Citizenship spokesman said the change to the pass mark was in the context of the series of reforms to the skilled migration program undertaken by the Australian Government since 2008. "These reforms have ensured the skilled migration program is a responsive and demand driven program," the spokesman said. "The cornerstone of this migration reform package will be the introduction of SkillSelect from July 1."

SkillSelect is a new electronic service for managing the skilled migration program. Intending migrants without an employer sponsor wanting to live and work in Australia will need to complete an online EOI, then based on claims of their skills and attributes, will be allocated a score against the points test. SkillSelect will rank intending migrant's scores against other EOIs.

The highest ranking migrants across a broad range of occupations may be invited to apply for a skilled visa. "Delivery of a balanced migration program requires careful management," the spokesman said. "SkillSelect will provide greater control over who can apply for a skilled visa and when they can apply."

The previous pass mark was appropriate in the context of the skilled migration reforms, with a greater emphasis on employer-sponsored skilled migration and managing a growing pipeline of unsponsored skilled migration applications.

The pass mark for existing general skilled migration subclasses 175, 176, 475, 487, 885 and 886 will remain at 65 points.

The pass mark for the new SkillSelect visas will encourage a broader range of people with the skills and attributes needed in Australia to register their interest in migration.

(Source: DIAC)

5) WA State Government GSM Sponsorship

The WA government is still formulating its procedures for obtaining state sponsorship after 1st July 2012 for the various sponsored visa categories 190, 487, 489, 886.

Currently it is expected for the new EOI options (190, 489) that a person wishing to have a state sponsor them will lodge an Expression of Interest if they can get to 60 points (they include in that total the 5 points – for 190 or 10 points –for 489 obtainable from State Sponsorship).

The WA government will then look through the EOI database and nominate those people with occupations on their state migration plan, who have expressed interest in WA sponsoring. These people will then have PRIORITY over other skilled applicants, even those with more points such as 70, 75, in receiving an invitation to lodge a visa application.

In other words the EOI is lodged first, you don't go to the State Government as an initial step for those 190,489 applications.

You do though still continue to go to the WA government for existing 487, 886 applications as an initial step.

(Source: DTWD)

6) New DIAC Fees from 1st July 2012

A range of DIAC fees will rise from 1st July 2012 for new applications. Some more popular (unpopular ha) ones are :

- 885/886 \$2960 to \$3060
- Contributory Parent 2nd visa charge \$40015 to \$42220
- Visitor \$110 to \$115
- 801 (Spouse onshore) \$2960 to \$3060
- 100 (Spouse offshore) \$1995 to \$2060

(Source: DIAC)

7) New Business Skills Visas

The Business Skills Program will be replaced by the Business Innovation and Investment Program on 1 July 2012. The Business Innovation and Investment Program introduces some key reforms that were recommended by a comprehensive review of the Business Skill Program in 2011.

The reforms include the following key changes:

- renaming the Business Skills Program to the Business Innovation and Investment Program
- reducing the number of visa subclasses from 13 to three by:
 - removing the independent visa categories and other underused visa subclasses
 - absorbing the separate business owner and investor subclasses as streams of a single visa subclass
- integrating the new Business Innovation and Investment visas with the skilled migrant selection model, SkillSelect, which will be launched on 1 July 2012
- facilitating entry of entrepreneurs that have sourced venture capital funding in Australia
- introducing an innovation points test for provisional visa applicants
- granting access to flexibility provisions to achieve permanent residence and encourage innovative business
- increasing asset thresholds to better align with the Australian business community
- changing key visa criteria to improve the integrity of the program.

In addition to these reforms the department will be creating a visa pathway to provide for significant migrant investment into Australia. This initiative is expected to be implemented in the 2012-13 program year. Further information on the Significant Investor visa can be found in the Significant Investor Information.

See: <http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/business/significant-investor.pdf>

The new program will be made up of three visa subclasses:

- Business Talent (Permanent) (subclass 132)
- Business Innovation and Investment (Provisional) (subclass 188)
- Business Innovation and Investment (Permanent) (subclass 888).

Link: <http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/business/business-skills-program-reforms-1jul12.htm>

(Source: DIAC)

8) Demise of subclass 845

The reform of the Business Skills Program sees the demise of the subclass 845 Established Business in Australia visa.

This visa has been on it's last legs for quite a while as the normal feeder visa for (subclass 457 Independent Executive) closed to new applicants back in 2003.

However some other temporary visa holders may have been holding out hoping to qualify from student and normal 457 visas since then. This now closes on 30th June 2012.

9) DIAC Processing Times

Details of Processing times for :

GSM visas are available here

<http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/general-skilled-migration/estimated-allocation-times.htm>

For other visa categories are available here

<http://www.immi.gov.au/about/charters/client-services-charter/standards/2.1.htm>

Okay folks, hold on to your hats as the new changes become affective from 1st July and we will see how well DIAC's new online RSMS and EOI systems work out.

Next newsletter on Monday 16th July, enjoy your month ..

Cheers

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