



## Q&A – Migration Program Planning and Delivery

### 1. *What impact has COVID-19 had on the delivery of the Migration Program?*

- Migration continues to make substantial contributions to Australia’s economic prosperity, national wellbeing and social cohesion.
- The Australian Government is closely monitoring migration and visa settings to ensure they are consistent with public health measures, are flexible and do not displace job opportunities for Australians so that Australia can deal with the immediate and post recovery impacts of COVID-19.
- COVID-19 has had significant impacts on the Department of Home Affairs’ operations.
  - Health restrictions implemented in Australia and many other countries have disrupted the Department’s visa processing services; and
  - Travel bans implemented around the world to manage health risks limit arrivals of temporary and permanent migrants to Australia.
- Australia’s migration settings are designed to be flexible and respond to changing circumstances, such as COVID-19.
  - The ongoing impacts of the pandemic worldwide, both medically, socially and economically, will have a significant influence on the shape of Australia’s Migration Program going forward.
  - Migration policies must be carefully calibrated to provide employment opportunities for Australians, support critical industries, and position Australia’s economic recovery.

- COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the Migration Program.
  - The Government must ensure that migration settings support Australia post recovery from the impacts of COVID-19, and in doing so, the livelihood of Australians who become unemployed as the economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis deepen also needs to be prioritised.

## **2. What impact has COVID-19 had on Net Overseas Migration?**

- Border closures have had a significant impact on net overseas migration.
  - In comparison to net overseas migration (NOM) for the 2018-19 year, NOM is expected to fall by 30 per cent in 2019-20 and even further in 2020-21.
- The Migration Program can change to respond to changing circumstances.

## **3. What is the Government doing to ensure the visa system supports COVID-19 response and economic recovery?**

- Protecting the health of Australians during the global pandemic is the Australian Government's priority. Borders will only re-open at a time and in a manner that is safe, guided by health advice, and with secure border arrangements in place.
- A carefully calibrated migration program is an important part of Australia's economic recovery and will create jobs and bring investment to help Australia rebound from COVID-19.
  - Migration will be a key component of Australia's economic recovery.
- To date, the Government has shown a commitment to protecting the health of Australians, supporting businesses and jobs, and securing food supply while we combat COVID-19.
- The Acting Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs has made a series of announcements in relation to:
  - temporary visa holders;
  - visa options to support the agriculture sector; and
  - student visa work conditions.
- Information is available at <https://covid19.homeaffairs.gov.au/staying-australia>

- The Government is closely monitoring migration and visa settings to ensure they continue to support public health measures and critical industries.
- Carefully targeted migration for skilled workers who create jobs will help in Australia's economic recovery from COVID-19.

**4. *When will the Government announce the size and the composition for the 2020-21 Migration Program?***

- In the COVID-19 recovery period, migration will be a key component of Australia's economic recovery.
- The Australian Government is considering how best to shape the Migration Program to drive economic growth and support job creation during this post recovery phase.
  - This will take into consideration the economic conditions in Australia, future skill needs, changes in the labour market and the population objectives of states and territories.
- Until otherwise advised, the existing 2019-20 Migration Program settings will continue to remain in place. This means the 2020-21 planning ceiling will be retained at 160,000 places, the level set for the 2019-20 Migration Program.
- This includes:
  - 108,682 places for the Skill stream.
  - 47,732 places for the Family stream.
  - 236 places for the Special Eligibility stream.
  - 3,350 places for Child visas

**5. *Will States and Territories be given any nominations in the 2020-21 Migration Program, or are the State/Territory skilled nominated programs and Business Innovation and Investment Program closed indefinitely?***

- The State and Territory nominated visa programs will play an important part in Australia's economic recovery and continue to be a part of the Migration Program.
- The Australian Government is considering how best to shape the Migration Program into the future to drive economic growth and support job creation.

- Nominations will be made available to States and Territories in line with these considerations, in the following categories:
  - Skilled – Nominated (subclass 190).
  - Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (Provisional) (subclass 491).
  - Business Innovation and Investment Program.

**6. *What invitation rounds for Skilled Independent (subclass 189) and Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) (Family Sponsored) (subclass 491) continue to be run each month?***

- The Government is closely monitoring migration and visa settings to ensure they are consistent with public health measures, are flexible and do not displace job opportunities for Australians so that Australia can deal with the immediate and post recovery impacts of COVID-19.
- Targeted invitation rounds have continued each month and prioritise skills which are in critical need and will aid Australia's economic recovery.

**7. *What changes will be made to the Migration Program in 2020-21?***

- Until otherwise advised, the existing 2019-20 Migration Program settings, including the program size and composition, will remain in place.
- The Government's current focus is dealing with the immediate health and economic impacts of COVID-19.

**8. *Why did the Government decide to retain the 2019-20 Migration Program settings?***

- The Migration Program is generally announced each year as part of the Federal Budget in May.
  - Due to the Government's focus on responding to the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis, the 2020-21 Budget was deferred for consideration until October 2020

**9. *Will stakeholders be consulted ahead of any potential changes to the 2020-21 Migration Program?***

- The Department plans to proceed with engagement with State and Territory governments regarding their nomination allocations for the 2020-21 Migration Program.
- Relevant stakeholders will be advised if any further decisions are made regarding program settings for the 2020-21 Migration Program.

**10. Are migrants allowed entry to Australia during this time? If so, how is the health and safety of Australians being protected?**

- Decisions by the ABF Commissioner to grant exemptions for travel for compassionate and compelling circumstances must be balanced against the Government's intent for imposing the travel ban and the health risks posed to the Australian community by international travellers.
- All travellers arriving in Australia by air or sea must be isolated in mandatory quarantine accommodation for 14 days from their arrival, with few exceptions.
  - For more information see: <https://covid19.homeaffairs.gov.au/>
- Travellers who have a compassionate or compelling reason to travel to Australia will need to have an exemption from the Australian Border Force Commissioner.
  - Each case is unique and is considered individually based on the information provided in the application, and supporting evidence must be provided.
  - All applications need to be completed in full, translated in English if necessary, with valid and readable documentation attached. Incomplete applications will be returned and this will delay the process.
  - Each application is considered on its own merit and applicants are informed if further information is required, or why the exemption has been refused.
  - Applications for exemptions must be made at least 48 hours prior to any planned travel.
  - Applications for exemptions are considered according to the date of the planned travel, with priority given to those needing to travel urgently.
  - To limit the spread of COVID-19 in the Australian community, from 20 March 2020 all foreign nationals who do not meet the travel exemptions will not be allowed to enter Australia.
  - Temporary visa holders currently outside Australia will still need to apply for an exemption to travel to Australia. Those without a valid visa will not be considered for a travel exemption.
- The current travel restrictions have been implemented on the advice of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC).

- These decisions are not taken lightly, but the Government's priority is to protect the Australian community against the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Only Australian citizens, a permanent residents, immediate family members of an Australian citizen or permanent resident or New Zealand citizens usually resident in Australia can travel to Australia.
  - For more information see: <https://covid19.homeaffairs.gov.au/>
- Immediate family members of Australian citizens and permanent residents who hold a temporary visa will need to provide evidence of their relationship.