

Global Immigration alert

October 2024



Australia

Non-sponsored visa pathways

Executive summary

While details of the Skills in Demand (SID) and National Innovation visas (NIV) are being refined, employers may also consider alternative visa pathways for candidates outside Australia, including:

- ▶ the Working Holiday visa program which continues to expand
- ▶ bespoke visa programs under bilateral agreements, including with the United Kingdom and India
- ▶ Pacific labour mobility pathways

As business sponsorship and labour market testing is not required, these visas may provide a useful pathway for short-term secondments and early career professionals.

Additional recent immigration updates include:

- ▶ tighter policy guidelines for the Short Stay Specialist subclass 400 visa
- ▶ caps on the number of international students expected to be in place for the 2025 academic year
- ▶ renaming Australia's national occupational classification

Short Stay Specialist subclass 400 visa

Applications for stay in Australia of more than three months in any twelve-month period on a subclass 400 visa, including as a result of a subsequent application, will now be more carefully scrutinised. While EY has not experienced any changes in the outcomes of visa applications, employers should prepare a solid business case where a stay of longer than three months in a twelve-month period is required.

Working Holiday visa program

This program continues to expand and now includes over 40 eligible countries. The two visas in this program allow stay in Australia for up to one year. Applicants can apply for a second and third Working Holiday visa after completing specified work in regional Australia. Working Holiday visa holders are permitted to work with one employer for six months, unless the work is performed in a different location or in critical sector including agriculture, health, aged and disability care and tourism and hospitality.

Working Holiday Visa subclass 417

Applicants must have a passport from a country on the list of eligible countries for this visa and show they have a reasonable prospect of obtaining employment in Australia. For most eligible countries, applicants must be aged 18 to 30, or up to 35 for select countries.

Work and Holiday Visa subclass 462

Applicants must have a passport from a country on the list of eligible countries for this visa, be aged 18 to 30 and meet the education requirement set for their home country.

[Annual caps](#) on the number of visas for each eligible country are also in place. Recent amendments to the subclass 462 visa include:

- ▶ addition of 200 Filipino and 1000 Indian passport holders per year
- ▶ a preapplication random ballot process for candidates from China, Vietnam and India

Bilateral arrangements with the United Kingdom

Working Holiday Visa Program subclass 417

UK citizens may apply up to the age of 35 and are eligible for a second and third Working Holiday visa without the need to complete specified work in regional Australia.

Innovation and Early Careers Skills Exchange Pilot (IECSEP)

The [IECSEP](#) was launched in 2023 to provide visa pathways with permission to work in Australia for early career professionals and proven innovators from the UK:

- ▶ Innovation stream: a three year visa for highly skilled and experienced individuals with a demonstrated contribution to innovation

- ▶ Early Careers stream: a one year visa for tertiary qualified professionals aged 21 to 45 who have at least three months experience and prospective employment in Australia. This stream is suitable for short-term placements, secondments and intra-company transfers

In 2024, up to 2000 UK citizens may apply under the pilot through Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

Bilateral arrangements with India

Mobility Arrangement for Talented Early-professionals Scheme (MATES)

MATES is expected to open in late 2024 to enable up to 3000 Indian graduates and earlier career professionals per year to apply for a visa for two years with permission to work. Applicants must:

- ▶ be 30 years of age or younger
- ▶ have Proficient English
- ▶ have graduated within the last two years from an eligible educational institution with a qualification in a target sector: renewable energy, mining, engineering, ICT, AI, FinTech and AgriTech

Pacific Labour Mobility

Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme (PALM)

The PALM Scheme is a temporary migration program to address lower-skilled labour shortages in regional and rural Australia and nationally for select agriculture manufacturing sectors. Business must apply through DFAT to fill positions for short term placements of up to nine months or longer-term placements up to four years.

Pacific Engagement visa (PEV)

This permanent visa is available to 3000 nationals of the Pacific islands and Timor Leste per year who are aged 18 to 46. Candidates must enter a ballot to be selected to apply for a visa. The 2024 ballot is now closed.

Student Visa Caps

Legislation capping the number of international student caps looks set to pass when Parliament sits in November 2024.

Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA)

On 6 December 2024, Australia's new national occupational classification will be released, replacing the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO). It is expected that the SID visa and Core Skills Occupations List (CSOL) will reference the OSCA.

Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) have provided evidence-based advice to the Minister for Immigration on the CSOL. The next steps are for JSA to publish their analysis and the Minister to release the CSOL for the Core Skills stream of the SID visa.

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor changes in immigration legislation and policy and keep you informed. Contact your EY advisor to discuss any issues raised in this alert, including support for alternative visa pathways.

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