



# Global Immigration alert

September 2025

## Australia

### Occupation list for skilled visas open for consultation

#### Executive summary

Following the *Migration Strategy* reforms to Australia's employer sponsored visa programs implemented in December 2024, further significant change is not expected during the rest of the current government's term in office. However, changes are proposed to the Core Skills Occupation List (CSOL) which underpins employer sponsored visa programs.

In this alert we also discuss the recently announced Migration Program planning levels for 2025-2026 and elements of the *Migration Strategy* which are underway.

#### Core Skills Occupation List

The CSOL provides access to the Core Skills stream of the temporary Skills in Demand (SID) (subclass 482) visa and the Direct Entry Stream for employer sponsored permanent migration. Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), a government agency, is responsible for labour market analysis and stakeholder consultation to provide advice to government on the skilled occupations which are essential to Australia's workforce needs. The Minister for Home Affairs decides on the final CSOL.

Consultation on the [2025 CSOL](#) has been launched and submissions may be made to JSA by 26 September 2025.

Nearly 300 occupations are listed as 'targeted for consultation'. This list is largely drawn from the new Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA) which has replaced the previous classification system referred to in the current CSOL. Many occupations have been reclassified in OSCA.

Employers may also provide evidence on the need for additional skilled occupations to be included on the CSOL.

We do not expect occupations will be removed from the CSOL in the near future. However, JSA has also published a list of 113 current CSOL occupations where they found the evidence for inclusion provided in the past was less compelling.

Employers may now provide evidence-based submissions demonstrating the skilled occupations which should be on the CSOL to meet workforce needs, with a focus on:

- targeted/reclassified occupations
- skilled occupations to be added to the CSOL
- current CSOL occupations flagged as 'less compelling'

New and emerging occupations not yet classified in OSCA are not within the scope of this consultation. A separate [OSCA maintenance consultation](#) process is being conducted by the Australian Bureau of statistics with submissions due in March 2026.



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## Migration Program 2025 - 2026

The 2025-26 permanent Migration Program has been retained at 185,000 in total. Around 71%, 132,200, places are allocated to the skilled stream. The family stream is largely comprised of demand driven Partner and Child visas. Allocations within the skilled visa stream have also been retained:

- Employer Sponsored 44,000
- Regional 33,000
- Skilled Independent 16,900
- State/Territory Nominated skilled 33,000

4,300 places have been allocation to the National Innovation Visa (NIV). Candidates nominated by a State or Territory Government agency are given a higher priority by the Department of Home Affairs. State governments of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia have established schemes to nominate candidates for a NIV visa. Each State has published its own criteria for nomination. Other States and Territories may establish additional schemes in the future.

### Application processing time

With no additional Migration Program places, prolonged processing of employer sponsored permanent visa applications by the Department of Home Affairs is expected to continue, currently averaging 13 months and up to 18 months in many cases.

Employers should also continue to plan for prolonged processing of SID visa applications. Published processing time for SID visa applications at the time of writing is roughly 3 weeks to 3 months for the Specialist Skills stream and 3 to 5 months for the Core Skills stream. EY is seeing these processing times reflected in practice.

### Looking ahead

Some components of the *Migration Strategy* remain underway, including:

- further consultation on Skilled Independent and regional migration
- sponsorship compliance: register of sponsors and expanded data matching with the Australian Tax Office and other agencies

### Key steps

Employers should consider:

- manage stakeholder expectations regarding processing time
- mapping roles to the new OSCA classification system
- providing evidence-based submissions to JSA demonstrating the need for identified OSCA skilled occupations to be listed on the CSOL to meet their workforce needs
- the benefits of an immigration compliance health check

EY will continue to monitor these issues and keep you informed. Please reach out to your EY immigration advisor should you wish to discuss the impact of any changes and support with a submission to JSA.

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