

Australian Government Announces More Changes to the Skilled Migration Program, Creating More Opportunities for Businesses, Employers and Skilled Migrants Inbound to Australia

On Saturday 26 October 2019, the Morrison government announced that both Perth and the Gold Coast will be reinstated as “regional locations” from 16 November 2019. This change will come into effect at the same time the two new regional visas are to commence – the Skilled Employer-Sponsored Regional visa (subclass 494) and the Skilled Work Regional visa (subclass 491).

In [its joint media release](#), the government confirmed that these additional changes are a “key pillar” of its “Population Plan”, aimed at easing the congestion pressures in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, as well as providing attractive destinations and incentives for both employers and skilled migrants to conduct business, live and work in regional Australia. As a result, there will be an extra 2,000 skilled regional visa places, increasing the regional cap from 23,000 to 25,000.

As of 16 November 2019, the Skilled Regional visa (subclass 489) and the Regional Sponsored Migration visa (subclass 187) (direct entry stream) will close to new applications and the new Skilled Employer-Sponsored Regional visa (subclass 494) and Skilled Work Regional visa (subclass 491) will commence. They offer eligible visa holders a pathway to permanent residency after three years, via the “to be introduced” (from November 2022) subclass 191 visa.

The key differences between the old visas and the new visas are:

- Priority processing
- Ability to apply for permanent residency without a second nomination stage, if eligible
- Lower cost to employers, with only one SAF levy stage for the subclass 494 nomination (compared to the two stages for the current subclass 482 (TSS visa) to ENS subclass 186 permanent resident pathway)
- More points available to subclass 491 visa applicants
- Broader range of occupations available than non-regional pathways:
 - For the subclass 491, 504 eligible occupations (yet to be announced)
 - For the subclass 494, 673 eligible occupations (yet to be announced)
- Expanded classification of regional areas – including Perth, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, Lake Macquarie, Illawarra, Geelong, Newcastle, Wollongong, Adelaide, Hobart and Canberra
- The time required to live and work in regional Australia will increase from two years to three years
- The visa validity period will increase to five years



A copy of the Migration definitions table from the press release is copied below.¹

Definition	Locations	Regional Incentives
“Major Cities”	Sydney Melbourne Brisbane	NA
Cities and Major Regional Centres	Perth Adelaide Gold Coast Sunshine Coast Canberra Newcastle/ Lake Macquarie Wollongong/Illawarra Geelong Hobart	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to the dedicated 25,000 regional places• Priority processing on regional visas• Access to the Regional Occupations List – more jobs compared to non-regional lists• International students studying at regional universities will be eligible to access an additional year in Australia on a post-study work visa
Regional Centres and Other Regional Areas	All other locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to the dedicated 25,000 regional places• Priority processing on regional visas• Access to the Regional Occupations List – more jobs compared to non-regional lists• International students studying at regional universities will be eligible to access an additional two years in Australia on a post-study work visa• Priority in negotiating region-specific Designated Area Migration Agreements (DAMAs)

If you have any queries regarding these visas or want to know more about the skilled migration visa program contact Rachel Barnett



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¹ <https://minister.homeaffairs.gov.au/davidcoleman/Pages/morrison-government-increases-regional-migration-target.aspx>