



Australian Government
Office of the Migration Agents
Registration Authority



Detailed Consumer Information

Ethical profession | Empowered consumers | Engaged stakeholders

Considering help from a migration agent?

Tips to help you if you decide to use the services of a registered migration agent.

What does a registered migration agent do?

A registered migration agent uses their knowledge of migration law and procedure to offer advice or assistance about:

- choosing and obtaining an Australian visa
- renewing a visa
- a visa being refused or cancelled
- seeking a review to the tribunal
- nominating or sponsoring people to Australia
- dealing with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (the Department) on your behalf.

How do I tell if a migration agent is registered with the Office of the MARA?

All registered migration agents have a unique Migration Agents Registration Number. You can check if an agent is registered by:

1. Going to the Office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority's (Office of the MARA) website at <http://www.mara.gov.au>
2. Click on  FIND AN AGENT
3. Select how you would like to search an agent from the drop down box. You can find an agent by using their given names, family name, Migration Agents Registration Number, or business name.
4. Click on  Search to search for the agent.

How do I choose a registered migration agent?

Ask the agent questions about their experience in providing immigration assistance — particularly in the area in which you require help.

You may also check the Office of the MARA's website to see if the agent has been suspended, cancelled or cautioned in the past for any misconduct.



DID YOU KNOW?

No person can guarantee you will get a visa - even if the person is a registered migration agent.

Make sure your agent is registered with the Office of the MARA

In Australia, a migration agent must be registered with the Office of the MARA. Unregistered practice in Australia is illegal.

If you are outside Australia, we recommend that you use a migration agent registered in Australia if possible. There are some registered migration agents who practice overseas.

The Office of the MARA regulates migration agents to ensure that they:

- have and maintain good knowledge of immigration requirements
- run their businesses professionally
- have professional indemnity insurance
- pass criminal history checks
- behave according to the Code of Conduct for registered migration agents.

What about lawyers and education agents — can they give immigration assistance?

Lawyers need to be registered with the Office of the MARA before they can give immigration assistance and help you with your visa application.

Education agents in Australia cannot provide immigration assistance unless they are also a registered migration agent.

Who is an 'authorised recipient'?

An authorised recipient is a person who you name to receive all correspondence from the Department on your behalf. Your registered migration agent will be your authorised recipient unless you advise otherwise. The Department will then send all correspondence about your case to your agent and not to you.

Who is an exempt person?

Some people in Australia do not need to be registered and can help you with your application. These exempted people can help if they do not charge a fee:

- your spouse, parent, brother, sister, child or adopted child
- sponsors and nominators
- parliamentarians and their staff
- officials whose duties include providing immigration assistance; and
- members of diplomatic missions, consular posts or international organisations.

You have chosen a registered migration agent – what should you do next?

Tips to help you make the most of your registered migration agent's services.

How much does it cost to use a registered migration agent?

There are no set scale of fees. However, a registered migration agent must set and charge a fee that is reasonable for your case. A list of average fees is available from the Office of the MARA's website at <http://www.mara.gov.au>

If you cannot afford to use a registered migration agent, there are organisations and schemes that may be able to assist you. These include Legal Aid Societies, legal advice services or your local Migrant Resource Centre. Community Legal Centres can provide legal assistance. A list is available at <http://www.naclc.org.au>

Understand what services are included in the agent fees

Make sure you know what services will be provided as part of the fees you pay. A list of average agent fees can be found on the Office of the MARA website at <https://www.mara.gov.au/Consumer-Information/What-does-it-cost-to-use-an-Agent-/default.aspx> Agent fees are in addition to visa application charges.

You may choose to pay the fees yourself directly to the Department or request a receipt for the visa application charge from your registered migration agent.



DID YOU KNOW?

Your registered migration agent must provide you with a Statement of Services before you pay.

Obtain a copy of the *Information on the Regulation of the Migration Advice Profession*

A registered migration agent must provide you with a copy of the *Information on the Regulation of the Migration Advice Profession* once they have agreed to do work for you. This document must be provided before they start on the agreed work. It explains what you can expect from a registered migration agent and how you can make a complaint about your agent to the Office of the MARA.

Let the Department know that you are using a registered migration agent

Once you have engaged your registered migration agent, you will need to advise the Department. Your agent may fill in and ask you to sign a Form 956. You can also send the Department a letter.

The Department can then discuss your case with your registered migration agent. Even if you are using a registered migration agent, you can still contact the Department at any time to discuss your visa application.

Stay involved in the process

Your registered migration agent is responsible to keep you regularly informed of the progress of your application.

However, it is important that you continue to be actively involved in the application process so you can monitor progress and check the information your agent is providing is correct. This way, you can help ensure that any problems are identified early.

Be aware of requirements for submitting documentation to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship

Your registered migration agent should submit your visa application to the Department complete with all the required supporting documentation. The processing of your application will be delayed if this is not provided.

If the Department requests missing documentation or additional information, your registered migration agent will be asked to provide it by a certain date. It is important that the documents are provided to the Department by this date. Late submissions may mean your visa application will be refused.

Check with your registered migration agent before these dates to ensure that the information has been provided, and ask your agent for written confirmation.

Keep your original documents

Most documents the Department needs can be provided as certified copies. You should keep original documents such as birth certificates, passports, marriage certificates and other documents that are valuable and difficult to replace.

Your registered migration agent can certify documents for you. This means your agent signs a copy of the original document stating that they have seen the original and it is an identical copy. You can then keep your original documents and your agent can provide the certified copies to the Department as part of your application.



DID YOU KNOW?

Your registered migration agent must return any documents that belong to you within 7 days after you have asked.

Keep written records

The process of applying for some visas can involve many dealings with your registered migration agent and their staff. It is important that you keep records of these communications.

You should at least keep a record of:

- who you spoke to
- when you spoke to them
- a short description of what was said; and
- what was agreed.

Confirm all your discussions and instructions to your registered migration agent in writing

As well as keeping a record of every time you speak with your registered migration agent, or their staff, you may wish to confirm your discussions in writing. This helps to ensure that there are no misunderstandings between you and your registered migration agent and help to resolve any misunderstandings if they occur.

If you have access to the Internet, you may wish to send a short email confirming what was said and agreed.

It is important that you keep copies of any letters or emails you send to your registered migration agent. You should also keep copies of letters and emails that you receive and include any reference numbers that your agent may give you.



DID YOU KNOW?

You are responsible for the information provided to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship - even if someone else filled in the form for you.

Be aware of possible tribunal costs

If your application is refused, you will be informed if you have a right of review to a tribunal — the Migration Review Tribunal or Refugee Review Tribunal. The tribunals can review decisions made by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

You may wish to discuss this with your registered migration agent to get a full understanding of your prospects of success. You should also ask whether there are any additional fees.

For more information about the review process or the tribunals, visit the Migration Review Tribunal and Refugee Review Tribunal's website at <http://www.mrt-rrt.gov.au>

Concerns about your migration agent – what can you do?

Reporting unregistered practice

Unless exempt, it is illegal for anyone to provide immigration assistance in Australia without being registered with the Office of the MARA. The reason it is a serious crime is to protect you from being given incorrect advice or losing your money to unscrupulous operators posing as migration agents.

Report unregistered persons to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship on 1800 009 623.



DID YOU KNOW?

If your registered migration agent wants to stop working for you, they must write to let you know when they intend to stop and what arrangements have been made about appointing another registered migration agent.

Discuss your concerns with your registered migration agent

If you have concerns about your registered migration agent's actions or advice, it is important to address these concerns as soon as possible. You should firstly discuss your concerns with your registered migration agent to see if they can be resolved.

Remember to keep a written record of your discussions.

Terminating the services of your agent

If at any time you wish to end the appointment of your registered migration agent, you should inform your registered migration agent.

You will also need to complete Parts B & C of Form 956 and return the form to the Department to let them know that you are no longer using your agent and that you no longer wish for them to be your authorised recipient. Form 956 can be downloaded from <http://www.immi.gov.au/allforms/pdf/956.pdf>

Unless this happens, the Department must continue to deal with your registered migration agent and continue to send all correspondence relating to your application to them.



DID YOU KNOW?

You can contact the Department of Immigration and Citizenship on 131 881, Monday to Friday, between 8:30am to 4:30pm.



DID YOU KNOW?

Making a complaint to the Office of the MARA will not affect the outcome of your visa application.

Unable to resolve the matter with your registered migration agent? Contact the Office of the MARA

If you are not satisfied with the service provided by your registered migration agent and wish to complain about their conduct, contact the Office of the MARA. You can provide details of your complaint written in your own language.

The Office of the MARA will:

- professionally and fairly treat your concern
- investigate complaints against registered migration agents and discipline them where appropriate
- keep you informed of the progress of your complaint
- arrange mediation where appropriate.

The Office of the MARA cannot order a registered migration agent to refund your money, but we can discuss options with you.

More information about how to make a complaint and our complaints handling process is available at <https://www.mara.gov.au/Consumer-Information/Making-a-complaint-about-a-RMA/Complaints/default.aspx>

Contact the Office of the MARA

For more information about registered migration agents, contact the Office of the MARA in any of the following ways:

- Website: www.mara.gov.au
- Email: info@mara.gov.au
- Phone: 1300 226 272 or +61 2 9078 3552
- Fax: +61 2 9078 3591
- Street address: Level 8, 22 Market Street, Sydney
- Postal address: PO Box Q1551
QVB NSW 1230

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