

## Tech jobs added to priority visa list

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**Programmers and ICT security specialists** will get prioritised visa processing to enter Australia and bypass travel restrictions under an expansion of the skilled migration program.

Immigration minister Alex Hawke on Tuesday announced that 22 new occupations would be added to the Priority Migration Skilled Occupation List, which was launched in September last year offering prioritised visas and exemptions from travel restrictions for the jobs listed.

The new occupations include electrical engineers, analyst programmers, software and application programmers, ICT security specialists and multimedia specialists. The existing occupation list also included developer programmers and software engineers.

Visa holders who are sponsored by an Australian business in one of the listed occupations will be able to have their visa prioritised and request an exemption from the current travel restrictions, but will still have to undergo quarantine for 14 days at their own expense.

The previous priority occupation list allowed software engineers and developers to obtain visas in the last year despite Australia's closed borders, according to TechVisa director Sam Bricknell.

"Many of our clients talk to us about how tight the market is and it's more competitive than ever to get the right talent," Mr Bricknell told InnovationAus.

"So adding more occupations to the priority list to allow sponsorship from overseas will hopefully help them get the right talent and assist with COVID recovery."

Visas under the priority scheme are typically issued within two weeks, Mr Bricknell said, but the main challenge currently is getting flights and then quarantining in Australia.

"For the right people though, the companies are willing to wait and in many cases don't really have enough local talent for there to be any other option."

The new occupations were selected after consultation with local SMEs and larger businesses, Mr Hawke said.

"Government has received valuable feedback from Australian business stakeholders on critical skill vacancies, which has been considered together with data from the National Skills Commission, in order to develop today's update to the Priority Migration Skilled Migration List," Mr Hawke said.

"The Morrison Government will continue to support Australian businesses, including through skilled migration, as the engine room of our nation's economy."

The announcement comes just weeks after the federal government moved to cut the number of business innovation and global talent visas on offer from the next financial year as part of a significant rejigging of Australia's skilled migration program.

The number of business innovation visas issued in 2020-21 was 13,500, but this will be cut down to 11,000 next year. The number of visas issued under the Global Talent program will be slashed from 15,000 to 11,000 in 2021-22.

This will coincide with an increase in the number of employer-sponsored visas, from 22,000 and 23,500, along with a rise in regional visas and skilled independent visas.

A recent report from the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) found that 23 per cent of permanent skilled migrants in Australia are working in a job beneath their skill level, making a big hit to productivity.

The CEDA report proposed a new online platform to connect potential migrants with employers and their vacancies before they land in Australia.

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