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MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION, CITIZENSHIP, MIGRANT SERVICES AND
MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

MEDIA RELEASE

25 November 2021

Visa changes to support the reopening of Australia and our economic recovery

The Morrison Government is making it easier for highly skilled migrants to remain in Australia and to continue working in critical sectors as Australia's economic recovery continues.

Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs Alex Hawke said these measures recognise the contribution of skilled migrants who remained here during the COVID-19 pandemic and encourage them to stay in Australia.

"Eligible skilled workers, already in Australia, will continue to support local businesses facing critical shortages, particularly in health, hospitality and our regions," Minister Hawke said.

"This recognises the economic value-add of these critical workers, and retaining them will greatly assist in Australia's economic recovery."

"The changes compliment the Government's recent announcement that fully vaccinated eligible temporary and provisional visa holders may enter Australia without a travel exemption from 1 December 2021," he said.

These visa changes will improve access to permanent residence for:

- Existing Temporary Skill Shortage (subclass 482) visa holders in the short-term stream
- Legacy Temporary Work Skilled (subclass 457) visa holders who no longer meet the age requirement.

“This is a special concession recognising those highly skilled migrant workers who chose to stay in Australia throughout the pandemic, while continuing to address Australia’s acute shortages. This allows them to stay here, with a pathway to Australian citizenship,” Minister Hawke said.

“There are currently about 20,000 primary Temporary Skill Shortage and 457 visa holders in Australia who may benefit from these arrangements. Most of these workers are employed in the highest-skilled occupations and the largest cohorts of workers benefiting from these changes include those currently employed in the health and hospitality industries, including many workers in regional Australia,” Minister Hawke said.

The Government will also extend visas for skilled regional (provisional visa) holders (subclass 489, 491 and 494) in recognition that this cohort has been adversely affected by COVID-19 related travel restrictions.

“Current and expired skilled regional provisional visas will be extended, providing additional time to meet regional work requirements for permanent residence,” Minister Hawke said.

“There are currently around 9,000 skilled regional provisional visa holders overseas. These visa holders can enter Australia from 1 December 2021, and they will also be eligible for an extension of their visa,” he said.

In recognition of ongoing border arrangements, the Government will also extend by a further six-months Visa Application Charge waivers for new Visitor visa applicants overseas where their visa expired, or will expire, between 1 January 2022 and 30 June 2022.

“This measure will support the tourism industry by welcoming back visitors once it is safe to do so,” Minister Hawke said.

The Government has announced further measures to support the return of international students and graduates, bolstering the international education industry by:

- Allowing Temporary Graduate visa holders, who have been unable to travel to Australia as a result of COVID-19 international border restrictions, to apply for a replacement visa;
- Increasing the length of stay on Temporary Graduate visas in the Masters by Coursework and Vocation Education and Training (VET) streams;
- Simplifying the requirements for Temporary Graduate visa applicants for VET sector graduates; and
- Extending the existing measure for student and temporary graduates to recognise time spent offshore studying online to count towards qualifying for a Temporary Graduate visa application.

These changes are consistent with the [National Plan](#) to safely reopen Australia and follow earlier changes which have seen us welcome home fully vaccinated Australians, permanent residents and their immediate family members.

For more information please visit the [Department of Home Affairs website](#).

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