

CLOSURE OF THE PANDEMIC EVENT VISA

It is already too late to apply for a temporary activity visa (subclass 408) for COVID-19 pandemic outbreaks.

Only those who currently possess a Pandemic Event visa will still be eligible to apply for one starting on September 2, 2023.

Until we close this visa to all new applications on February 1, 2024, these visa holders may be qualified for a future visa.

From 2 September 2023, all other visa holders will be ineligible for the Pandemic Event visa.

EXISTING PANDEMIC EVENT VISA HOLDERS

This does not change the visa expiry date of existing Pandemic Event visa holders. Holders of pandemic event visas may be eligible for a subsequent visa on or after September 2, 2023, for a period of up to six months. This will hold true up until February 1, 2024, when all applications for the visa will be rejected.

If approved, visa requests submitted on or after 2 September 2023 will have a stay length of up to 6 months. As a result, visa holders will have more time to weigh their alternatives.

Holders of Pandemic Event visas will not be able to apply for a new visa after 2 September 2023 unless they have a job, or a work offer in Australia and their current visa is set to expire in less than 28 days. Applications will now contain a VAC of \$405 as of 2 September 2023.

OTHER TEMPORARY VISA HOLDERS

Temporary visa holders who are employed or have a job offer and have 90 days or less left on their visas may continue to apply for a Pandemic Event visa before September 2, 2023, with no Visa Application Charge (VAC).

Temporary visa holders who submitted a Pandemic Event visa application before 2 September 2023 will have their requests evaluated in accordance with the policies in effect at the time of submission. This includes the time they spent living in Australia.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA EASES PERMANENT RESIDENCY RULES FOR SKILLED MIGRANTS.

In an effort to streamline and hasten skilled migration, the WA government recently unveiled significant changes to its migration programme.

The State Nominated Migration Programme (SNMP), according to the WA government, gives skilled immigrants who are already residents of the state, as well as those from other states and abroad, priority.

Significant modifications to the State Nomination Migration Programme for Western Australia.

- Waiving the \$200 application fee
- Halving the requirement to have an employment contract from 12 months to six months.
- Removing requirements for applicants to demonstrate sufficient funds.
- Reducing additional English requirements for professional and manager occupations
- Reducing work experience requirements for the 2022-23 program year to attract more skilled workers to WA.

- In addition, over 100 occupations have been added to the state's Skilled Migration Occupation List to cover a broader range of occupations with high demand for skilled workers, including health, aviation, ICT, agriculture, primary industries, community services, environmental management, mining, urban planning, events, and engineering roles.

"These changes will remain in place for the 2023-24 program year," Ms Ho said.

In 2023-24, additional amendments to the migration criteria have been announced by the state government.

It includes:

- Waiving the requirement to provide a six-month contract of employment for visa Subclass 190 applicants for building and construction trade occupations.
- Prioritising of invitations for applicants in Western Australia to retain skilled workers in the state, with applicants residing in the rest of Australia and overseas ranked equally.
- Prioritising of invitations for industries with critical demand for skilled workers, including building and construction, health and medical, teaching, tourism, and hospitality occupations

UPDATED - MAKING IT EASIER TO HIRE OVERSEAS TRAINED DOCTORS TO WORK IN AUSTRALIA.

On September 16, 2023, the Visas for GPs programme will end, eliminating the need for employers of international medical graduates (IMGs) to apply for a Health Workforce Certificate (HWC).

Employers nominating IMGs for primary care positions in Australia after September 16, 2023, are no longer obliged to include a HWC with their nomination application.

HR Plus will receive HWC application requests until September 5, 2023, and HWC exemption requests until September 13, 2023. Applications that are received prior to these dates will be processed in accordance with the programme requirements.

The Department of Home Affairs' legislation, systems, and websites will be amended by September 16, 2023, to reflect these changes. More information on the application procedure may be found at Visas for GPs.

CAPSTONE RESTRUCTURE COMMENCING OCTOBER 2023

Beginning in October 2023, changes to the format and delivery of the Migration Agents Capstone Assessment (Capstone) will be made. The adjustments include:

- combining the two written tests that are currently given into one written test
- expanding the oral examination
- lowering the Capstone's price from \$2690 to \$2156
- lowering the annual intakes from four (4) to three (3).

\$15 MILLION INVESTMENT IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION FOR AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE

The Albanese Labour Government today announced the fulfilment of its election promise to establish a new Community Language Schools grant programme by allocating \$15 million over two years to encourage children who desire to learn a language other than English.

Grants of up to \$30,000 over two years will be made available to qualified community language schools, allowing them to expand their programmes to include preschoolers, buy new materials, create high-quality learning environments, pay for expenses like rent or teacher training, or waive fees for underprivileged students.

On Friday, September 1, GrantConnect, the government's grant information portal, will go live with more details about the programme and an easy-to-use application form. From 1 September through 9 October 2023, applications for the Community Language Schools Grant will be accepted.

EMPOWERING WOMEN FROM REFUGEE, HUMANITARIAN AND MIGRANT BACKGROUNDS WITH DIGITAL LITERACY

At least 800 women from refugee, humanitarian, and immigrant backgrounds will benefit from a digital skills programme that twenty community organisations from throughout Australia will deliver with a combined \$400,000 award.

The Digital Sisters programme will assist, empower, and educate these women as they develop the digital literacy skills necessary to contribute positively to their local community through the employment of bilingual mentors.

The programme will provide women from migrant or refugee backgrounds with a community-based digital skills for life programme. This will involve learning how to use websites to apply for jobs, navigate social media to stay connected to your community, and upskill.

STATE AND TERRITORY MIGRATION PROGRAM ALLOCATIONS RELEASED

The allocations for the [2023-24 State and Territories nominated programs](#) have been released. The allocations are much reduced from the previous program year and there has been no allocation to for the business skills stream.

State	Skilled Nominated (Subclass 190) visa	Skilled Work Regional (Subclass 491) visa	Business Innovation and Investment Program (BIIP)*
ACT	600	600	0
NSW	2,650	1,500	0
NT	250	400	0
QLD	900	650	0
SA	1,100	1,200	0
TAS	600	600	0
VIC	2,700	600	0
WA	1,500	850	0
Total	10,300	6,400	0

‘GHOST COLLEGES’ LOOPHOLE CLOSED IN STUDENT WORK CRACKDOWN

A visa system gap in Australia that allowed foreign students to switch from expensive private colleges to universities so they could work instead of study has been fixed.

The approach, according to an investigation by this masthead this month, has resulted in a proliferation of "ghost colleges" throughout Melbourne, where tens of thousands of students have registered to attend classes but few really do.

Under new federal regulations, students won't be able to switch from a university to a vocational programme until six months into their programme.

A "concurrent study" arrangement, which enables students to enrol in both a university and a vocational programme at the same time, is how many people who arrive in Australia on student visas end up in vocational education.

The rule was created to assist students in becoming ready for the workforce through quick courses like barista training. Instead, an increasing number of people are obtaining their visas through universities, then switching to a less expensive vocational programme before being paid for their first semester at university.

Students who want to apply for a visa after October 1 will also require at least \$24,505, or about 20% more in funds than they have right now.

JUDGE, COMMONWEALTH TO PAY MAN \$300K FOR FALSE IMPRISONMENT

For the false incarceration of a man on a "invalid" order, a federal judge, the state of Queensland, and the Commonwealth have been forced to pay slightly under \$310,000 in damages.

Father-of-two's imprisonment for contempt of court in December 2018 after he failed to provide financial records in a marital lawsuit was judged to include "serious and fundamental issues" by Judge Salvatore Paul Vasta in the then-Federal Circuit Court.

The guy, who was given the alias Mr. Stradford, received a 12-month prison sentence, but only spent seven days in jail before the "gross miscarriage" was overturned by the Federal Court's entire bench.

LAW STUDENT CAUGHT WITH GUNS MAKES PLEA FOR EMPLOYMENT

An ambitious lawyer who was found guilty of owning unlicensed firearms has requested a tribunal to permit him to work at a boutique law firm.

A final-year bachelor of laws student requested that the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) consider authorising her employment as a legal secretary at a Central Coast and Newcastle-based firm, neither of which will be named in light of the decision.

The student, who was in his late 20s, was apprehended by police about five years ago while in possession of two rifles that belonged to his late grandfather and two pistols that a sick buddy had entrusted to him. None of the four weapons had been registered, despite the fact that he held a firearms licence.

The student will neither "pose a risk to the public and nor will his employment have a negative impact upon the integrity of the legal profession," according to NCAT, who also noted the student's regret over his offence and the age at which he did it.

The student was accepted as a lay associate, but before entering the legal industry, he will need to submit a new application.

OUTGOING DPP SHANE DRUMGOLD LAUNCHES PROCEEDINGS AGAINST ACT BOARD OF INQUIRY

Former Director of Public Prosecutions of the ACT Shane Drumgold has filed a lawsuit against a board of inquiry that found "several serious findings of misconduct" against him.

The ACT Supreme Court has set the lawsuit brought by Mr. Drumgold against the board of inquiry for September 14th.

It followed the publication of a report by inquiry chair and former Queensland solicitor-general Walter Sofronoff, which found that the abandoned prosecution of Bruce Lehrmann over claims that he had raped Brittany Higgins constituted a "egregious abuse" of the DPP position.

Mr. Lehrmann is still denying the accusations.