

Mobility: Immigration alert

January 2022



Australia

Relaxation of border and visa restrictions to address skill shortage

Executive summary

Australia's international border continues to gradually reopen. The lifting of restrictions on many fully vaccinated travellers in late 2021 resulted in 200,000 arrivals and 230,000 departures in December 2021 - the highest volumes since March 2020.

Requirements for travel remain dynamic and recent developments include:

- additional vaccines recognised for entry to Australia
- consideration of restrictions on travellers from Australia due to Australia's current Omicron outbreak
- more flexible pre-travel COVID-19 testing options
- lifting the 14-day quarantine requirement for fully vaccinated travellers into Queensland and South Australia

In addition to opening the border to skilled temporary workers, work limitations on certain other visas have been temporarily lifted in response to the current workforce crisis.

Vaccinations recognised for travel

The list of vaccines recognised by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) for travel to and from Australia continues to expand with the most recent addition of Gamaleya Research Institute Sputnik V. Current information should be checked on the [TGA website](#) before making travel arrangements.

Pre-travel testing options expanded

The COVID-19 testing requirements for entry to Australia are now more flexible with the acceptance of:

- a negative COVID-19 PCR or other Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (NAAT) test taken within 3 days before departure, or
- a medical certificate as proof of a negative Rapid Antigen Test taken under medical supervision within 24 hours before departure, or
- a past positive medical clearance certificate from a medical practitioner to the effect that the traveller has recovered from COVID-19 within 30 days of departure and is not considered to be infectious.

The Department of Health's [requirements for a past positive medical certificate](#) should be reviewed when making plans to travel. Currently the certificate must:

- be provided within 30 days of departure and at least 7 days since the first positive test result, and
- state the date of the first positive test result and that the traveller has not had a fever or respiratory symptoms in the last 72 hours.

Airlines may have a proforma for a past positive medical certificate and additional pre-travel processes. Other airlines may not accept a medical certificate and instead require a negative test. Airlines' requirements and procedures should also be checked in advance.

Leaving Australia

In addition to airline and [Australian government departure requirements](#), travellers should review entry requirements and any quarantine arrangements at their proposed destination.

Quarantine and domestic borders

Queensland and South Australia have recently lifted the mandatory 14-day quarantine requirement for fully vaccinated travellers. [State and territory requirements](#) remain dynamic and may change with little notice.

Re-establishing the temporary migrant workforce

The pandemic has shone the spotlight on Australia's reliance on temporary migrants. To attract workers in response to the current workforce crisis:

- working holiday makers' and overseas students' visa application charges may be refunded after arrival in Australia
- overseas student graduates with unlimited work rights may extend their Temporary Graduate (subclass 485) visas as an interim measure then apply for a replacement visa from July 2022
- work limitations for students and working holiday makers have been temporarily lifted
- student, working holiday maker and Temporary Graduate visa holders do not need to obtain a travel ban exemption to travel to Australia

For students and working holiday makers, work limitations will not be enforced and other visa conditions must be complied with. The law has not been amended. When conducting VEVO checks the standard information on visa conditions will appear. Advice on the Department of Home Affairs' website can be relied upon as a 'defence' and should be retained on file:

- [Student visa holders](#) may work more than 40 hours each fortnight until at least April 2022 when the arrangement will be reviewed
- [Working holiday makers](#) may work for more than 6 months with one employer until the end of 2022

A working holiday visa may be a faster alternative to a Temporary Skill Shortage (TSS) visa to relocate talent. Switzerland has recently been added to the list of over 40 countries participating in the reciprocal visa scheme.

Skilled Migration in 2022

EY anticipates that during the calendar year:

- the migration program will increase to around 200,000 per year with two thirds of the program allocated to skilled migrants
- employer sponsored visas will receive priority
- occupation lists may be amendment and simplified into one list
- new pathways to permanent residence will be created including for Short-term stream TSS visa holders in Australia

Employers are also reminded that the transitional arrangement providing a more flexible pathway to permanent residence for individuals who held or had applied for a subclass 457 visa on 18 April 2017 ceases on 18 March 2022.

Next steps

EY will continue to keep you informed about adjustments to international border restrictions and developments in skilled migration. Contact your EY advisor to discuss any of the issues raised in this alert.

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