



Fact Sheet

Priority Processing for General Skilled Migration Visas



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In December 2008, the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans, announced a range of changes in response to the global economic crisis to ensure the 2008-09 skilled migration program was better targeted and more responsive to industry needs. These changes came into effect on 1 January 2009.

The measures were introduced to ensure that the skilled stream of the migration program is driven by the needs of industry and targets skills in critical need across a number of sectors, particularly those skills in shortage and which contribute to the health of the economy.

These changes included priority processing with preference to:

- employer-sponsored permanent migration applications, where skilled migrants are sponsored to go into jobs unable to be filled locally.
- applicants nominated by state and territory governments, who were also given greater scope to meet critical skill shortages in their jurisdiction; and
- applicants who had nominated an occupation identified as in critical shortage.

Since then, the global economic situation has continued to deteriorate, and this has significantly weakened Australia's economic situation, including an increase in unemployment. The migration program is one of the tools the Government can use to assist industry with skills shortages, and, as such, is continually reviewed and assessed for its relevance and outcomes in light of the economic and social needs of Australia. The program is modified as these needs change.

The Minister has announced additional measures to further assist in the management of the economy through targeting occupations in critical shortage. These include measures to manage the range of skills and number of people entering Australia with work rights.

This will be achieved through managing the migration program down to a lower level than originally planned, and tighter targeting of program outcomes through the removal of certain trade occupations from the CSL. The new ceiling for the 2008-09 skills stream of the migration program is 115 000 places.

This combination of measures is a balanced response to the changes in global economic circumstances and the corresponding effects in Australia. These changes in strategy in no way diminish the significance of our immigration system as a tool for supporting Australia's future economic and social development.

These measures allow skilled migrants who are sponsored by an employer for a specific job in Australia, are sponsored by a State or Territory government, or have skills in critical need to be given priority for the remainder of 2008-09 program year within the lower program ceiling.

It is important to note that even in times of economic downturn, migrants can contribute at least as much to our labour force and economy as they take from it, as they bring substantial human and financial capital. The degree to which migrants add to our economy is closely linked to their skills and abilities.

Also, Australia may need a strong supply of overseas skilled workers in different economic circumstances and migration is still an effective means of securing a labour force as a balance to our ageing population.

These measures will preserve the selection of high-skilled migrants but reduce the emphasis on migrants and temporary entrants who compete with Australians in the job market where skills are not in critical demand.

The Critical Skills List (CSL)

The CSL only applies to people who are seeking to migrate under the skilled migration program and who are not sponsored by an employer or nominated by a state or territory government.

The following outlines key information about this CSL:

- it includes mainly information technology professionals, engineers and medical professionals
- the CSL is a smaller list of occupations developed in consultation with state and territory governments
- applications from people nominating the occupation of Accountant will receive processing priority only if they have completed the Skilled Migration Internship Program – Accounting (SMIPA); and/or they have demonstrated that they have proficient English language skills under the International English Language Testing System (IELTS 7) in the past two (2) years
- this list will be subject to ongoing review to ensure that it remains responsive to skill demands.

Greater scope to meet critical skill shortages in state/territory jurisdictions

This change will provide state and territory governments with greater scope to meet critical skill shortages in their jurisdiction. Under previous arrangements, state and territory governments could nominate applicants against a restricted range of occupations, in areas where they considered a skills shortage existed in their jurisdiction:

- states and territories have been provided with an expanded baseline list of occupations which will be reviewed regularly
- in addition, state and territory governments have been offered a quota of 500 places in 2008-09 to nominate skilled migrants in occupations beyond their existing lists of eligible occupations.

More information is available.

See:

[2008-09 Migration Program Changes- March 2009 - Frequently Asked Questions](#) (70KB PDF file)

[Critical Skill List](#) (39KB PDF file)

[Is your occupation in demand?](#)

[Nomination by State/Territory government](#)