

Key milestones in skilled migration

Delivered	Measure
Establishment of the <i>Migration Regulations 1994</i>	Multiple skilled migration subclasses managing independent, sponsored and concessional arrangements. Points test included an allocation for skill level of occupation, and for age up to 45 years.
1996-1997	Government announced greater priority to be given to business and skilled stream. Business (Long Stay) (subclass 457) visa introduced.
2003	Provisional visas for business and investor migrants were introduced establishing pathway requirements to permanent residence.
2006-2007	General Skilled Migration (GSM) visas reviewed. Reformed GSM program implemented with consolidation of visa subclasses, and major changes to points allocations and weightings as a proportion of the passmark.
2010	Review of the GSM points test. Migration Occupation in Demand List (MODL) revoked and a Skilled Occupations List (SOL) targeted at occupations in demand in Australia in the medium to long term implemented.
2011	New GSM points test came into effect, 65 points required. No points to be awarded for nominated occupation but it must be on the SOL. Maximum age increased to 50.
2012	The Consolidated Sponsored Occupation List (CSOL) was introduced and applied to applicants nominating for employer sponsored visas. Major reforms to the skilled migration program were introduced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SkillSelect came into effect, and new GSM visas (subclasses 189, 190 and 489) were implemented with a revised passmark of 60 points. • New permanent employer sponsored subclass 186 and 187 visas were introduced. • The Business Innovation and Investment Program was introduced (subclasses 188 and 888).
October 2013	Government announced that the number of Skill Stream migrants would not fall below two thirds of the whole Migration Program.
2017	Update of skilled visa occupation lists, and integrity amendments to permanent employer sponsored skilled visas. Maximum age for permanent skilled migrants lowered from 50 to 45 years (with some exemptions).
March 2018	Temporary Skill Shortage (TSS) (subclass 482) visa commenced, replaced subclass 457 visa program. Government announced the Supporting Innovation in South Australia (SISA) pilot – a new temporary visa arrangement to support foreign entrepreneurs to develop innovative ideas and launch early start-ups in South Australia.
July 2018	Passmark for GSM points tested visas (subclasses 189, 190 and 489) increased from 60 to 65 points. Introduction of the Global Talent Employer Sponsored (GTES) program, which allows established businesses with an annual turnover of more than \$4 million and technology-based and STEM-related start-up businesses to sponsor eligible overseas skilled workers.

Delivered	Measure
August 2018	<p>Skilling Australians Fund levy commenced for all employers sponsoring overseas skilled workers under the temporary and permanent employer sponsored visa programs.</p> <p>Revised labour market testing settings for the TSS visa.</p>
January 2019	<p>The <i>Migration and Other Legislation Amendment (Enhanced Integrity Act) 2018</i> and associated regulations commenced. This was the final part of the significant reforms to support the integrity of the temporary and permanent employer sponsored skilled visa programs. These measures included allowing the Department to share tax file numbers with the ATO and public disclosure of sponsor monitoring sanctions on the ABF website.</p>
July 2019	<p>The Global Talent Independent (GTI) program commenced to attract talented migrants of the highest calibre, with entrepreneurial ideas and cutting-edge skills within target industry sectors, who can relocate to Australia and contribute to the economy by driving innovation and supporting the creation of local jobs.</p>
November 2019	<p>Commencement of the Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 491) and the Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (Provisional) (subclass 494) visa.</p> <p>Additional points under the GSM points test for skilled partners, partners with good English language skills, single applicants, STEM educational qualifications, and regional nomination/sponsorship.</p>
November 2019	<p>Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme visa (subclass 187) (direct entry stream) and Skilled Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 489) (first provisional visa stream) closed to new applications from 16 November 2019.</p>
December 2019	<p>On 19 December 2019, the former acting Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs, Minister Tudge, announced a public consultation process, seeking submissions from stakeholders to inform the Department's review of the Business Innovation and Investment Program with a view to getting a better deal for Australia.</p>
April 2020	<p>A number of temporary changes to temporary skilled visa arrangements in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visa holders who have been stood down, but not laid off, to maintain their visa validity. • Businesses being able to reduce the hours of visa holders without the person being in breach of their visa condition. • 4-year visa holders re-employed after the COVID-19 pandemic to have their time already spent in Australia count towards their permanent residency skilled work experience requirements.
September 2020	<p>Implementation of a Priority Migration Skilled Occupation List (PMSOL) of 17 occupations (increased to 18 in November 2020) based on advice from National Skills Commission (NSC) and other Commonwealth departments prioritising migration for people with critical skills through employer sponsored visa programs.</p> <p>COVID-19 concessions introduced for certain visa applicants, holders and former visa holders (in relation to visa subclasses 887, 188, 888 and 790) who have been disadvantaged by COVID-19. Concessions apply retrospectively from 1 February 2020.</p> <p>To further Australia's quest to attract global talent, on 4 September 2020 the Government announced the creation of the Global Business and Talent Attraction Taskforce.</p>

Delivered	Measure
October 2020	Visa Application Charge (VAC) waivers available for new applications made by TSS and 457 visa holders who have not made their initial entry to Australia or have returned home due to COVID-19.
November 2020	Further changes to the subclass 887 visa for eligible applicants who are offshore to be granted a permanent visa, regardless of when they applied. Concession made for TSS and 457 visa holders who apply for the Temporary Residence Transition (TRT) stream of the subclass 186 or 187 visa. These concessions are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exempting loss of earnings due to COVID-19 from the high income threshold for age exemptions for applicants over the age of 45. • Allowing periods where a worker has been temporarily stood down, been on unpaid leave or had their hours reduced to count towards the relevant employment history requirements. • Taking a practical approach to time of application English language requirements where testing centres are closed due to COVID-19.