

Skill Migration

Skill Visa Grants

The Skill Stream of Australia's Migration (non-Humanitarian) Program is specifically designed to target migrants who have skills or outstanding abilities that will contribute to the Australian economy.

The migration to Australia of people with qualifications and relevant work experience can help to address skill shortages in Australia and enhance the size, skill level and productivity of the Australian labour force.

In 1999–2000, there were 35,330 people granted Skill visas, an increase of 330 (0.9 per cent) on the 1998–99 level. Of total Skill Stream visas, 13.5 per cent (4,780) were granted to onshore applicants.

The United Kingdom accounted for 5,537 of all 1999–2000 Skill Stream visa grants. Other major source countries included South Africa (4,615), India (4,064), Indonesia (2,741) and the PRC (2,670). Skill visa grants to people from Hong Kong again fell in 1999–00 by 33.0 per cent to 902 from 1,346 in 1998–99, while Skill visa grants to people from India rose by 74.7 per cent.

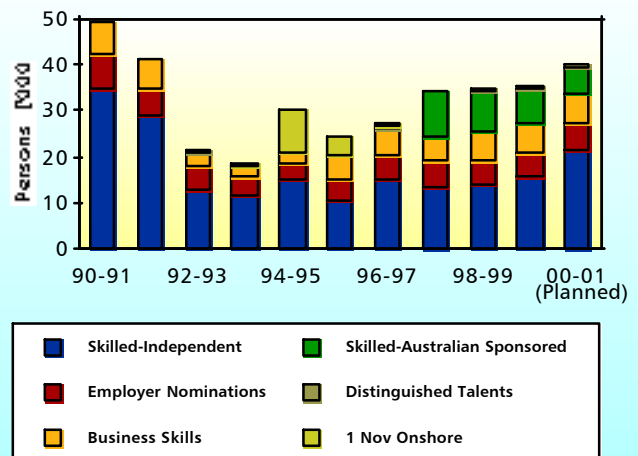
Impact of Changes to the Skill Stream

On 1 July 1999 the points test used to select the majority of Skill Stream migrants underwent its most fundamental change since its introduction in 1989, including the introduction of the following new visa categories: Skilled-Independent, Skilled-Australian Sponsored and Skilled-Regional Sponsored. In addition to a strengthening of the requirements that points tested applicants meet relating to skill, age and English standards, greater emphasis is now placed on targeting migrants who have skills in shortage in the Australian labour market.

This targeting of migrants has been achieved by the introduction of the Skilled Occupations List (SOL) from which all applicants must select an occupation to have their skills assessed against and by the awarding of additional points to applicants whose occupation is on the Migration Occupations in Demand List (MODL). Further points are available to applicants with a job offer in a MODL occupation. Information Technology occupations are prominent on the MODL.

Account is also now taken of other attributes applicants may have, including Australian qualifications and work experience, fluency in a language other than English, and spouse's skills. Applicants with Australian qualifications who apply within 6 months of completion of their studies are also now exempt from the need to have any skilled work experience. This is in recognition of the fact that their qualifications have been gained in Australia and the Australian labour market has shown a preference for Australian qualifications over many overseas qualifications.

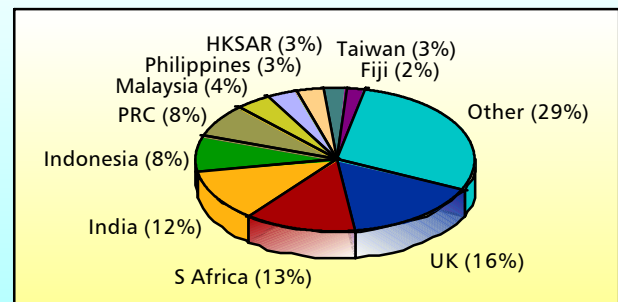
Fig. 2-4: Skill Visa Grants by Category



Source Data: IMIRS

Fig. 2-5: Skill Visa Grants by Country of Birth

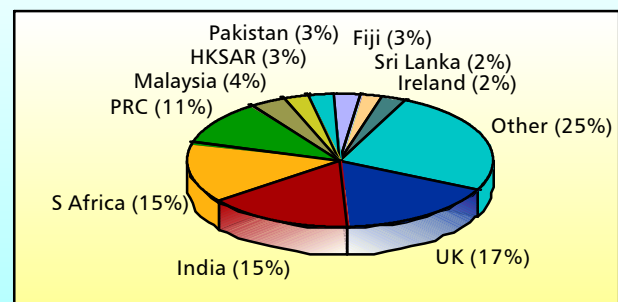
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Source Data: IMIRS

Fig. 2-6: Independent Visa Grants by Country of Birth

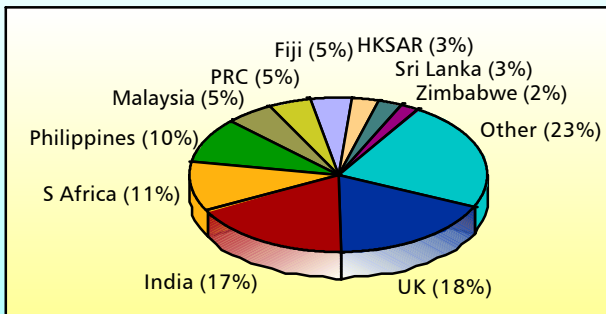
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Source Data: IMIRS

Fig. 2-7: Skilled-Australian Sponsored Visa Grants by Country of Birth

1999-00



Source Data: IMIRS

The impact of the changes to the points test categories of the Skill Stream is now flowing through to visa grants. In 1999–2000 there was a mixture of pre-1 July 1999 visa categories (Independent, Skilled-Australian Sponsored and Regional Sponsored) and post 1 July 1999 visa categories (Skilled-Independent, Skilled-Australian Sponsored and Skilled-Regional Sponsored) being processed simultaneously.

The impact of the new points tested categories has been most marked in several areas. Approximately 50 per cent of all applicants in the new points tested categories have applied on the basis of their skills in a MODL occupation. Of all applications lodged under the new Skill Stream categories, approximately 25 per cent are from computer professionals, and approximately 15 per cent are from accountants with nurses the next biggest occupational group. All of these occupations are in high demand in Australia.

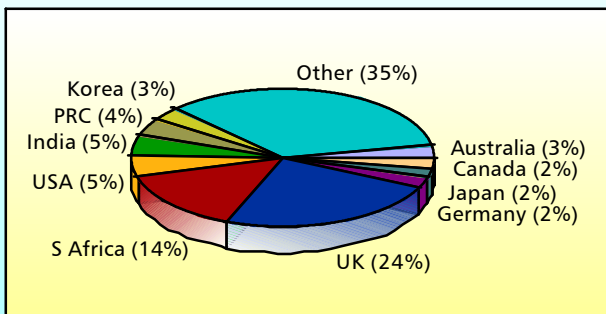
Further, approximately 50 per cent of all applicants in the new points tested categories have an Australian qualification.

The Employer Nomination Scheme (ENS) has also been modified to enable skills in national shortage to be better addressed in conjunction with the MODL. These changes are designed to encourage employers and industry bodies to make greater use of the ENS.

Business sponsored categories are accorded priority processing. Streamlined processing arrangements have been put in place for the Temporary Business Entry (Long Stay) visa. These allow visas to be granted without the need for full qualification assessments, medical examinations or penal certificates, except in areas of concern. For key activities, employers are not required to undertake labour market testing to show that the positions cannot be filled locally. The streamlined arrangements ensure that business is able to get highly skilled employees quickly when they cannot be readily located in the Australian workforce. The average processing times for Temporary Business Entry (Long Stay) visas overseas was 15 days at the end of 1999–2000.

Fig. 2-8: Employer Sponsored Visa Grants by Country of Birth

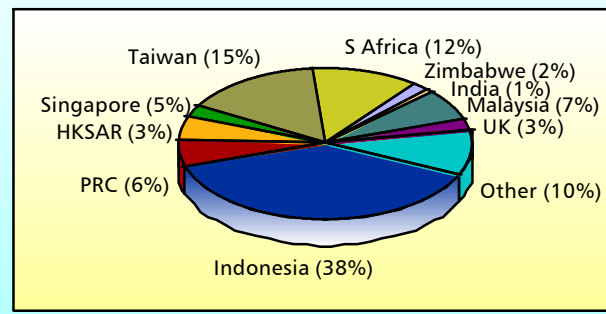
1999-00



Source Data: IMIRS

Fig. 2-9: Business Skill Visa Grants by Country of Birth

1999-00



Source Data: IMIRS

Skill Visa Categories

There are five main categories of Skill Stream migrants:

Skilled-Independent and Independent migrants — not sponsored by an employer or relative in Australia. They must pass a points test which includes, skills, age and English language ability (15,610 visas in 1999–2000).

Skilled-Australian Sponsored and Skilled-Australian Linked — Applicants must pass a points test which includes skills, age and English ability and receive additional points for sponsorship by relatives in Australia (7,900 visas in 1999–2000). Also includes Skilled Regional Sponsored and Regional Linked for those sponsored by relatives in designated areas (not points tested).

Employer Sponsored — Employers may nominate (or ‘sponsor’) personnel from overseas through the Employer Nomination Scheme (ENS), Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS) and Labour Agreements. These visas enable Australian employers to fill skilled permanent vacancies with overseas personnel if they cannot find suitably qualified workers in Australia. A total of 5,390 visas were granted in 1999–2000.

135 individuals whose country of birth was Australia are also included in the top 10. These individuals are children who were born in Australia of parents who are granted an ENS visa.

Business Skills migration — encourages successful business people to settle permanently in Australia and develop new business opportunities (6,260 visas in 1999–2000).

Distinguished Talent — for distinguished individuals with special or unique talents of benefit to Australia (110 visas in 1999–2000).

State Specific Migration Mechanisms

The Commonwealth Government, in consultation with State and Territory Governments, has introduced over the last five years a number of initiatives designed to assist State and Territory Governments to:

- encourage a more balanced dispersal of Australia’s skilled migrant intake; and
- address skill shortages that may exist in specific regions of Australia.

Research into patterns of population distribution and the reasons why migrants decide to settle in certain areas of Australia shows that there are three factors which are of primary importance in determining where migrants settle: location of family members; the availability of employment; and business opportunities. The initiatives are based on these factors.

State and Territory Governments determine the extent of their involvement in these initiatives depending on their own individual development priorities. These initiatives are collectively referred to as State Specific Migration Mechanisms (SSMMs) and include the following.

State/Territory Nominated Independent (STNI) Scheme

STNI enables State and Territory Governments to sponsor Independent category applicants identified through skill matching, who are willing to settle in their states and territories. These nominations are based on an audit conducted by the State or Territory Government to establish which skills are in short supply and where they are needed. Applicants must meet the pool mark for the Independent category to be eligible for STNI.

Skilled-Regional Sponsored (SRS) category and Regional Linked

Allows the sponsorship of applicants by relatives (including by first cousins and grandparents) to join them in designated areas. Designated areas are identified by State and Territory Governments. Currently Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong, Perth, Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast are not designated areas. All other parts of Australia are designated. Applicants must meet threshold English language, age and skill criteria. This category is not points tested.

Applicants in the Skilled Australian Linked (SAL) category receive 5 bonus points if their sponsor lives in a designated area. No further applications could be lodged in this category after 1 July 1999. The bonus points are no longer available in the Skilled Australian Sponsored category which replaced SAL as applicants who would be eligible for the bonus points can apply directly under SRS.

Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS)

Enables employers in regional Australia to nominate overseas personnel for permanent entry where the employer has been unable to recruit suitable skilled personnel through the local labour market. Applicants must meet English language, age and skill criteria but there is no points test.

Regional Established Business in Australia (REBA)

The Regional Established Business in Australia (REBA) category (introduced in July 1997) allows temporary residents who have established a successful business in Australia and who are sponsored by the State or Territory Government, to apply for permanent residence if their business is in a designated area.

State/Territory Sponsored Business Owner and Senior Executive

Provision also exists for bonus points for State/Territory sponsorship of Business Skills applicants which also attracts concessions in relation to net assets and the number of employees required.

Skill Matching Database

Operated by the Commonwealth, the database identifies skilled applicants who meet threshold criteria for English language, age and skills, and who are willing to settle in areas where their occupational skills are in demand. It is disseminated to State and Territory Governments and regional organisations, to encourage skilled migration to their regions through the RSMS or the STNI. It also assists in the targeting of regional promotional campaigns. The database is available on the Internet.

Skill Matching Visa

The Skill Matching Visa Class although similar in many respects to the STNI scheme and RSMS has specific features designed to complement major reforms to Skill Stream selection arrangements that came into effect on 1 July 1999. Applicants must meet threshold English language, age and skill criteria but there is no points test.

Fig. 2-10: SSMM Visa Grants by Category: 1996-97 to 1999-00

Category	96 97	97 98	98 99	99 00
RSMS	170	581	765	664
STNI, Skilled-STNI, Skill Matching Visa	not established	16	169	9
Regional Linked & Skilled Regional Sponsored	40	111	67	195
Skilled-Australian Linked(a)	850	984	1,744	2,384
State Sponsored Business Skills(b)	66	61	59	44
REBA	not established	0	0	13
Total	1,126	1,753	2,804	3,309

(a) Refers to applicants under this category who obtained bonus points because their sponsor lived in a designated area.

(b) Includes applications processed under offshore subclass 129 (State/Territory Sponsored Business Owner), offshore subclass 130 (State/Territory Sponsored Senior Executive), onshore subclass 842 (State/Territory Sponsored Business Owner) and onshore subclass 843 (State/Territory Sponsored Executive)

Source Data: IMIRS

State Specific Migration Mechanisms (SSMM) accounted for 3,309 visa grants in 1999–2000. This represents an increase of 18.0 per cent over the 1998–99 grant level of 2,804 visas. Most grants were made to applicants going to Victoria (50.1 per cent), followed by South Australia (21.2 per cent). This was the reverse of 1998–99 when the majority of visas were granted to applicants going to South Australia.

The increase in grants in 1999–2000 was due in the main to greater numbers of applicants receiving the 5 bonus points (sponsor lives in a designated area) under SAL (up 36.7 per cent from 1,744 in 1998-99 to 2,384 in 1999–2000). A small increase occurred in visas granted under the Regional Linked and Skilled-Regional Sponsored subclasses (up from 67 in 1998–99 to 195 in 1999–2000) and the first 13 visas were granted in REBA. Over 60 per cent of the applicants granted visas under SAL and its regional counterparts had sponsors in Victoria.

Grants under the RSMS dropped by 13.2 per cent from 765 grants in 1998–99 to 664 in 1999–2000. The only States to record increases were Tasmania (up 44.4 per cent) and Western Australia (up 3.0 per cent).

Fig. 2–10 and Fig. 2–11 provide details of activities in the various SSMMs.

Fig. 2-11: Distribution of Migrants Granted Visas Under State Specific Migration Mechanisms in 1999-00

Category	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Total
RSMS	18	30	60	373	69	65	33	16	664
STNI/Skilled-STNI/Skill Matching	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	9
Regional-Linked, SRS	9	131	15	16	5	0	9	10	195
SAL(a)	118	1,485	185	297	176	23	23	77	2,384
SSBS(b)	12	13	5	4	0	4	0	6	44
REBA	0	0	0	3	0	10	0	0	13
Total	157	1,659	265	702	250	102	65	109	3,309

(a) Refers to applicants under this category who obtained bonus points because their sponsor lived in a designated area.

(b) Includes applications processed under offshore subclass 129 (State/Territory Sponsored Business Owner), offshore subclass 130 (State/Territory Sponsored Senior Executive), onshore subclass 842 (State/Territory Sponsored Business Owner) and onshore subclass 843 (State/Territory Sponsored Executive).

Source Data: IMIRS