

BRIEF

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2018 - 2019

VISAS FOR GENERAL PRACTITIONERS – TARGETING AREAS OF DOCTOR SHORTAGES – IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE**KEY POINTS**

- The department is working closely with the Department of Home Affairs to implement the *Visas for GPs* measure.
- Implementation of the measure will be based on three key principles:
 - The measure is targeted at overseas-trained doctors (OTDs) seeking to work in primary health care;
 - Position endorsement will be required only for OTDs applying for an employer sponsored visa from within and outside Australia; and
 - OTDs in three medical occupations: Resident Medical Officer (RMO) (ANZSCO 253112), General Medical Practitioner (GMP) (ANZSCO 253111) and Medical Practitioner not elsewhere classified (MP nec) (ANZSCO 253999) will be subject to position endorsement requirement.
- Home Affairs require a simple system where all employer sponsored visa applications are accompanied with a position endorsement advice.
- The department expects to use the Rural Workforce Agency network to carefully consider implementation arrangements to deliver the measure.
 - To ensure the assessment process is effective, transparent, and in keeping with relevant legislation and regulatory frameworks, Rural Workforce Agencies will process applications for position endorsements according to guidelines provided by the Department of Health.
- Automatic or expedited position endorsements will be made available for:
 - State and territory employers who nominate a hospital-based position for filling by an OTD as well as employers in rural, remote and regional areas.
 - Existing employers and doctors seeking an extension of their existing working arrangements in the same position, same location with the same employer.

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- The international medical students graduating from an Australian university (Australia-trained doctors).

FACTS & FIGURES

- The *2014 Australia's Future workforce – Doctors* report estimated that by 2030, there will be a potential oversupply of around 7,000 medical practitioners in Australia. This is due to a surge in supply of locally trained medical graduates and sustained high level supply of overseas trained doctors through Australia's skilled migration program.
- Under the *Visas for GPs* measure, the number of overseas doctors entering the primary health care workforce through skilled migration program will be gradually reduced by about 200 doctors a year, over a period of four years.
- In 2017-18, around 2,650 employer sponsored visas were granted to overseas doctors seeking to work in Australia in RMO (ANZSCO 253112), GMP (ANZSCO 253111) and MP nec (ANZSCO 253999) occupations.

IMPACT ON REGIONAL AUSTRALIANS

- The measure will assist rural, remote and regional areas by directing overseas trained doctors towards these areas.

BACKGROUND

- The measure includes overseas-trained doctors applying from both within and outside Australia. This will allow the measure to divert OTDs residing onshore on an existing visa away from employment in areas of oversupply and potentially toward employment in areas of doctor shortage
- Importantly, this approach will not prevent currently practising OTDs from seeking to continue to work in their current role.
- This will help achieve the outcome by preventing employers in areas of over service from circumventing the measure by recruiting OTDs already onshore on other visas (e.g. tourists/visitors, Working Holiday Makers, etc).

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ATTACHMENTS

A – Recent Media Coverage

B – Implementation – Process Diagram

C – Sean Parnell articles: *Foreign doctors blow out Medicare;*
Clampdown on foreign doctor placements

D – Question on Notice (SQ18-000495)

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ATTACHMENT A

RECENT MEDIA COVERAGE

- Recent media coverage **incorrectly** stated that:
 - the measure will see overseas trained doctors being forced to leave Australia; and
 - that a new health agency is being established to block the use of overseas trained doctors (see Sean Parnell's articles of 1 September and 11 September 2018 in The Australian at **Attachment C**).
- Under the measure, all employers seeking to nominate a vacancy to be filled by an OTD will require an endorsement confirming the advertised position responds to genuine workforce need. Without the endorsement, the nomination will not be accepted by the Department of Home Affairs.
- The department is planning to expand existing arrangements with Rural Workforce Agencies (RWAs) to provide endorsements.
- RWAs have the expertise to determine whether an employer-nominated position for a medical practitioner should be open to an OTD in order to meet an identified local need for additional primary health services.
- The *Visas for GPs* measure is part of the Government's *Stronger Rural Health Strategy* which seeks to better distribute Australia's supply of medical practitioners and strengthen qualifications of those providing care to the community.
- To strengthen qualifications of medical practitioners, both Australian and overseas trained doctors are required to meet stringent requirements as part of their annual registration renewal processes, including demonstrating progress towards obtaining general or specialist qualifications and associated registration.
- OTDs must fulfil these registration and qualification requirements to continue practising in Australia.