

Department of Home Affairs

Answers to written questions on notice from Senator Amanda Stoker (dated 4 October 2019)

1. Why is the Gold Coast excluded from the definition of a 'regional area' for the purposes of the new skilled regional visas?

The classification of the Gold Coast as a metropolitan centre has not changed as a result of the Government's announcement. The Gold Coast has been classified as part of metropolitan Australia under the core skilled migration program since 1993 when the classification of parts of Australia as regional or metropolitan for skilled migration began.

One of the reasons for this classification is the Gold Coast's high population growth rate, which at approximately 2.6 per cent continues to significantly outstrip the Australian average of 1.6 per cent.

2. How does the Department justify the classification of Canberra and Adelaide as regional areas?

The current Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme visa (subclass 187) was introduced on 1 July 2012. Canberra and Adelaide have been classified as regional for this visa since that time.

3. What, if any, access will the holders of new skilled regional visas have to support though Medicare? If access is restricted, please provide an explanation.

Holders of the new skilled regional provisional visas will have the same access to Medicare as Australian permanent residents.

The Department of Health is in the process of amending the *Health Insurance Act 1973* to take effect from 16 November 2019.

4. Will new skilled regional visa holders have the same rights as permanent visa holders in relation to the purchase of residential property in a regional area? Do they have to apply for and receive foreign investment approval before purchasing any residential real estate in Australia? And, if so, do they have to pay the fee for applying for foreign investment approval?

New skilled regional visa holders may purchase residential property in a regional area.

Consistent with current arrangements for existing skilled regional provisional visas, temporary residents generally need to apply for and receive foreign investment approval before purchasing residential real estate in Australia. The Foreign Investment Review Board is the agency responsible for issuing property purchase approvals for foreign nationals.

5. Will the existing exemptions for the university sector available under the Employer Nomination Scheme (subclass 186) also be made available for subclass 494 Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (provisional) visa applicants? If not, why not?

Subclass 494 Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (provisional) visa applicants applying for university lecturer or faculty head positions will have exemptions for age, skill assessment and employment experience.

English language exemptions may be considered in the context of the labour agreement stream of the new visa.