

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
To:
Subject: FW: Immigration Programs Division: COVID-19 update [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Date: Friday, 1 May 2020 4:49:51 PM
Attachments: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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From: IPD communication
Sent: Friday, 1 May 2020 4:49 PM
Subject: Immigration Programs Division: COVID-19 update

Dear colleagues

Please see below the COVID-19 update from the Immigration Programs Division. It includes important information about changes to business processes, systems, and program updates for network staff onshore and offshore.

Immigration Programs Division—COVID-19 update

1 May 2020

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COVID-19 business process changes

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Transiting Australia

Posts may continue to grant Transit visa applications to those who meet visa criteria. Officers should check whether the flight itinerary is still valid, noting high numbers of flight cancellations and the closure of some transit hubs to international travellers.

Eligible passport holders may still be able to access Transit Without Visa (TWOV) arrangements, although numbers are likely to be small given reduced flights. Check the website on [Travellers eligible to transit without a visa \(TWOV\)](#) for the latest information on eligibility.

Travellers transiting through Australia who are unable to access Transit Without Visa (TWOV) arrangements need to apply for an exemption.

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Temporary visas

Temporary visa applications are generally low priority while travel restrictions apply. Posts should prioritise offshore applications that are directly related to travel exemptions or urgent need to travel.

Please continue to check the website regularly for the latest information

For posts that remain operational

When they are not assessing prioritised cases, posts should focus on digitising any paper applications and queuing applications for service resumption. Where PICs and other requested information have not been able to be met due to COVID-19 service disruptions, applications should not be refused. When services re-open, processing areas should take a flexible approach to further requests for information and providing a new timeframe.

Visitors onshore Ensuring visitors who are unable to depart Australia remain lawful is a processing priority. This includes considering no further stay condition waiver requests and assessing subsequent onshore Visitor visa applications.

Family visa

Due to travel restrictions and COVID19 impacts on health, English, and character checks the focus for the delivery of the 2019-20 Migration Program places has shifted to the finalisation of onshore applications. It is important to note:

- If not actively assessing escalated cases, offshore offices should prioritise digitisation of on-hand paper applications.
- Officers should not proceed to a refusal decision on the basis PICs and other requested information (for example, medical examination, requests for DNA, police clearance, biometrics and other supporting documents) where criteria cannot be met as a result of COVID-19 disruptions.

- Immediate family visa applicants who lodged an offshore application but are currently in Australia, should not be asked to travel offshore for finalisation of their applications at this time.
- Offshore Resident Return visa applications should be prioritised where the applicant meets the residence requirement or is an immediate family member of an Australian citizen or permanent resident.

From 1 April 2020, a new instrument under schedule 1 of the Migration Regulations came into effect, requiring that all new Child applications (subclasses 101,102,117,445) be sent to Perth from that date. Any application lodged offshore from 1 April 2020 is invalid. The Department's website has been updated to reflect this change.

Citizenship

Processing

New applications for Australian citizenship are still being accepted. Online applications are strongly encouraged for all new onshore and offshore citizenship applications. Processing continues on all lodged citizenship applications and citizenship approval will not be cancelled if a conferee cannot attend a ceremony within 12 months of approval.

Transfer of cases onshore

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Where possible, prior to post de-staffing please contact Citizenship and TIS Branch at s. 47E(d) to confirm:

- caseload transfer including number and status of cases
- A-based staff and/or LES support available
- process for digitisation and paper application transfer
- integrity or other complexities with caseload.

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

occurred in April 2020.
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)





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Factsheet: Service Delivery Partners (SDPs)

Last updated: 1 May 2020

As a measure to protect all staff and clients, service delivery partners (SDPs) are instigating their own policies and procedures to minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in Australian Visa Application Centres (AVACs) and Australian Biometric Collection Centres (ABCCs).

SDPs are dealing with a dynamically changing situation in many countries, with governments declaring measures such as business closures, self-isolation, travel bans and advisories on social distancing. Decisions regarding SDP closures are being made with consideration to local health advice.

As at 1 May 2020, 96 of 99 global SDP locations are temporarily closed. The remaining country operating is Mexico (Guadalajara, Mexico City, Monterrey). IPD and Channel Management Branch will continue to monitor and assess the situation at each region and provide updates to the network as they become available.

However, the Department will continue to recommend clients use online lodgement channels where available to minimise delays to visa processing.

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Note: Where there are disruptions to SDPs, please do not progress with application refusals due solely to the delays with biometrics collection.

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