

Key Brief Number: IG-01

**Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs
Additional Estimates Hearing – February 2025**

KEY BRIEF

Topic: Net Overseas Migration

Responsible Deputy: Dr Emma Cassar, Associate Secretary Immigration

Key Top Lines

- Net Overseas Migration (NOM) has historically followed a regular pattern of arrivals and departures, which is still disrupted following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data published on 12 December 2024 shows that while NOM remains elevated, it is continuing to decline.
 - o The preliminary NOM for the year to June 2024 was 445,638. This was almost 90,000 fewer than the year to June 2023 (535,518).
 - o The preliminary June Quarter 2024 NOM was 63,155 – 57,329 fewer than the June Quarter 2023 (120,484) and the lowest since lifting of border restrictions in December 2021.
- In the 2024-25 Budget, NOM was forecast to be 395,000 in 2023–24, 260,000 in 2024–25 and 255,000 in 2025–26, before returning to pre-pandemic levels of 235,000 in 2026–27.
 - o On 18 December 2024 the 2024–25 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) published a 2023-24 preliminary NOM of 446,000 – a decrease from the record 536,000 from the previous year.
 - o MYEFO published revised NOM forecasts of 340,000 in 2024–25, 255,000 in 2025–26 and 225,000 in 2026–27.
- Government actions to date have led to substantial declines in migration levels, with Student visa grants down by 6.4% this year against the same period last year (183,995 grants in 2024–25 to 31 December 2024 compared to 196,652 grants in 2023–24 to 31 December 2023).

Handling Notes:

- Lead witness is Michael Willard, Group Manager Immigration Operations.
- The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is responsible for preparing and publishing preliminary quarterly NOM estimates, revisions to quarterly NOM estimates and final outcomes of NOM. The ABS uses data provided by the Department of Home Affairs. Official data on NOM, however, is subject to long lags and significant revisions.
- Treasury produces NOM forecasts and projections as an input into the Budget and MYEFO and publishes further NOM forecast detail in the Population Statement.

Key Brief Number: IG-01**Key Points**

- The Migration Strategy actions continue to support the return to pre-pandemic levels through:
 - Strengthening integrity and lifting the standards in international education by increasing minimum English language requirements for student and graduate visas, a new genuine student requirement, and new powers to suspend high-risk education providers from recruiting international students.
 - Preventing Visitor visa and Temporary Graduate visa holders from applying for Student visas onshore.
 - Closing COVID concessions, including through ending the Pandemic Event visa and uncapped working hours for international students.
- Fewer departures than forecast have contributed to NOM remaining above Treasury forecasts. This occurs through visa holders legitimately transitioning onto other visas onshore, or while awaiting a decision, or tribunal review on a visa application.

If asked 'What are the key drivers of NOM?'

- NOM consists of arrivals and departures, with 667,000 migrant arrivals and 221,000 migrant departures in 2023-24.
- The largest component of NOM in 2023-24 was temporary visa holders at 465,000 (69.7% of total migrant arrivals). There were fewer temporary visa arrivals than 2022-23 (557,000).
- Permanent visa holder arrivals (91,000), Australian citizen arrivals (60,000) and New Zealand citizens (51,000) comprise the rest of migrant arrivals. These were however, higher than in 2022-23.
- International students were the largest temporary visa group with 207,000 arrivals in 2023-24 (31.0% of total arrivals), this was a decrease from the 278,000 in 2022-23. Other temporary visa holders included visitors (90,000), working holiday makers (80,000), and temporary skilled (49,000).
- In 2023-24, the number of migrant departures increased to 221,000, from 204,000 in 2022-23 (8% lower). Although the number of migrant departures has remained lower than the five year pre-pandemic average of 288,000.
- Many of those who arrived on temporary visas after travel restrictions were lifted, such as international students, are now starting to leave. For example, student visa departures increased by 15,000 (97.2%) from 2022-23. This will continue to have a downward impact on NOM as the number of temporary migrant departures increases.

If asked 'Why aren't migrants leaving?'

- People on temporary visas being motivated to remain in Australia, which reflects our relatively strong labour market and high living standards, and strong ties to Australia developed during border closures.
- Temporary visa holders are typically able to apply for a subsequent visa onshore. When this occurs, the visa applicant is provided a Bridging visa to remain in Australia while the new visa is assessed.
- Onshore visa applications typically reflect a reasonable progression through different visas, such as from a temporary skilled visa to a permanent skilled visa.

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Key Data and Statistics

Responsible SES: Dr Emma Cassar, Associate Secretary Immigration

	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26	2026–27
Treasury NOM forecast	202,000	537,000	460,000	340,000	255,000	225,000

Source: 2024 Population Statement and MYEFO 2024-25. Note these are rounded to the nearest 5,000. Arrivals and departures are published separately in the Population Statement.

ABS NOM actual and preliminary	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24
NOM arrivals	Actual 550,401	Actual 506,852	Actual 145,999	Actual 426,728	Actual 739,370	Preliminary 666,810
NOM departures	Actual 309,063	Actual 314,157	Actual 230,934	Actual 223,138	Actual 203,850	Preliminary 221,170
NOM	Actual 241,338	Actual 192,703	Actual -84,930	Actual 203,590	Actual 535,520	Preliminary 445,640

Source: ABS data, Overseas Migration (published on 13 December 2024).

Consultation

- Migration and Temporary Visas Division, Chief Economist.
- The Treasury

Additional Information

- In the 2024 Population Statement, the Treasurer stated that *The Government's Migration Strategy is helping to ensure our migration system works in the national interest. Net overseas migration is expected to return to around pre-pandemic levels over the next couple of years as arrivals stabilise and departures pick up.*
- The next ABS quarterly NOM update (September 2024) is due on 20 March 2025.

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Key Brief Number: IG-02

**Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs
Additional Estimates Hearing – February 2025**

KEY BRIEF**Topic: International Students****Responsible Deputy:** Ms Emma Cassar, Associate Secretary Immigration**Key Top Lines**

- The Department of Home Affairs (the Department) is supporting the Government's commitment for managing the international education sector at sustainable levels while efforts to improve its quality and integrity continue.
- Overall, in the Financial Year (FY) 2024-25 (to 31 January 2025), Student visa lodgements have reduced and grants are consistent with pre-pandemic (2018-19) levels.
- *Ministerial Direction 111 Order for considering and disposing of offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa applications* took effect on 19 December 2024.
- The Department continues to work with the Attorney General's Department and the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART), to reduce the number of student visa refusal appeals to the ART, to help manage pressures while maintaining the integrity of the Student visa program.

Handling Notes:

- Mr Damien Kilner, First Assistant Secretary Migration and Temporary Visas Division, will be the lead witness at the hearing, including:
 - Covering Student visa policy, program, processing information and statistics.
- The Department of Education is the lead agency on non-visa matters related to international education. Covering:
 - Administration and compliance with the *Education Services for Overseas Students* (ESOS) legislation and framework; the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS), and Tuition Protection Service; and
 - Indicative allocations for higher education new overseas student commencements 2025 and VET new overseas student commencements 2025.

Key PointsMinisterial Direction 111

- On 19 December 2024, Ministerial Direction 107 (MD107) was revoked and replaced by Ministerial Direction 111 *Order for considering and disposing of offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa applications* (MD111).
 - MD111 is not a student visa cap.
- Under MD111, high priority processing will apply to offshore Student visa applications associated with a provider in the higher education and vocational education and training sectors who have not yet reached their prioritisation threshold as indicated in the

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Clearing Officer: Dr Emma Cassar, Associate Secretary Immigration

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Department of Education system, PRISMS (Provider Registration and International Student Management System).

- The high priority prioritisation threshold for each provider is 80 percent of the indicative allocation of new overseas student commencements, as advised by the Department of Education and recorded in PRISMS.
- A range of cohorts will be given high priority outside of a prioritisation threshold, in recognition of their importance to Australia's strategic interests.
- Department of Education is the lead for matters related to indicative allocation levels.

If asked: Progress report on MD111. How many providers have reached the allocation level?

- As at early February 2025, there were 1,532 providers on Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) that offer courses to people studying in Australia on student visas (*Source: Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) on Australian Government data website (www.data.gov.au)*).
 - Of those 1,173 were Higher Education or Vocational Education and Training providers who were given an allocation level for 2025.
 - The Department of Education advises that as at 31 January 2025, 53 providers have exceeded the 80% threshold. 24 other providers were between 70% and 80% of their prioritisation threshold and are most likely to reach the threshold over the coming weeks.

If asked: Processing arrangements/update for providers who have reached their allocation levels.

- Providers who have reached their allocation level will be processed as "Priority 2 – standard" as outlined in MD111.
- As at 31 January 2025, there were 9,242 student visa applications on hand for the providers who reached their allocation level by 31 January 2025.
 - Between 1 July 2024 and 31 January 2025, 47,780 student visa applications were lodged by students seeking to undertake studies at these providers.
- As MD111 commenced on 19 December 2024, it is too early to comment on progress for Priority 2 applications.

Stakeholder Engagement

- The Department actively engages with the international education sector on changes in the Student visa space, including through the Education Visa Consultative Committee (EVCC).
- In October 2024, Assistant Minister Hill established a body to provide expert technical advice and perspectives to the Department regarding the delivery of the Student visa program. This body is now named the Student Visa Processing Technical Reference Group (TRG).
- The TRG succeeds the Student Visa Processing Taskforce, with the same composition, which was established to support Home Affairs' work in Student visa processing in the context of the implementation of work under the ESOS Amendment Bill.
- The TRG does not replace the EVCC, and is expected to meet until March 2025.

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- The Department (in conjunction with Departments of Education and Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR)) held two education provider sessions on MD111 in late December 2024 and another on 31 January (attended by over 1100 persons). The Department also participated in an International Education Australia Association briefing to ~600 members on 20 January 2025.
- So far no issues of significance have been raised regarding the operation of MD111.
- In addition the Department (for the period April 2024 to end January 2025) has undertaken 128 sessions, with education providers and stakeholders, reaching a combined audience of approximately 6200 persons.

Key Data and Statistics – Student visa activity summary

Damien Kilner, First Assistant Secretary Migration and Temporary Visas Division

- During FY 2024-25 to 31 January 2025:
 - 233,483 student visa applications were lodged which is down 12.75 percent compared to 2018-19 and down 30.85 percent compared to the same period last year.
 - 274,602 applications have been finalised, which is 7.45 percent more than for the same period in 2018-19 and 6.04 percent less than for the same period last year.
 - 216,601 of these finalisations were visa grants – reflecting a refusal rates of 17.4 percent.
 - The Student visa grant rate of 82.6% during this period is the second lowest (81.6% over the same period in 2023-24 was the lowest) since 2005-06 when the Department commenced reporting these indicators, but showing an improvement on last year.
- On 31 January 2025, there were:
 - 106,950 on-hand student visa applications: of which 21,693 were offshore applications and 85,257 were onshore applications; and
 - 536,681 student visa holders in Australia.
- The median (50th percentile) processing time for all student primary visa applications decided in January 2025 was 36 calendar days.
 - In January 2025, median processing times for student visa applications lodged outside Australia was 15 days; and for onshore in Australia, 173 days.

Consultation

- The Chief Data Officer, or their delegate undertaking the Data Clearance function, has cleared the statistics contained within this brief.
- International Division, Australian Government Department of Education.

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Additional Information

Statistic and Financial Reporting Period:

Statistics Date Ranges – 2024 November Additional Estimates	
Since last hearing	1 October 2024 – 31 January 2024
Financial Year	1 July 2024 – 31 January 2024

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Key Brief Number: IG-05

**Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs
Additional Estimates Hearing – February 2025**

KEY BRIEF**Topic: Visa response to the Hamas-Israel conflict****Responsible Deputy:** Dr Emma Cassar PSM, Associate Secretary Immigration**Key Top Lines**

- All non-citizens who wish to travel to, enter or remain in Australia must satisfy the requirements of the *Migration Act 1958* (the Migration Act) and the *Migration Regulations 1994*. This includes identity, health, character and security requirements.
 - The same criteria applies to all non-citizens applying for an Australian visa, regardless of nationality or location.
- The Australian Government is committed to protecting the safety of all Australians and has security checking procedures in place, drawing on information from several sources, including, but not limited to, alerts and profiles from other agencies, intelligence provided by other countries, departmental alerts, open source and information provided in the application form.
 - The Department of Home Affairs assesses all applications against security criteria in line with security agencies' guidance.
 - Checks are repeated multiple times along a person's journey to Australia, including at the time of visa grant, while they hold a visa outside Australia, and once they arrive in Australia.
- The Australian Government is making available, on a case by case basis, a temporary humanitarian visa pathway to people impacted by the Hamas-Israel conflict.

Key PointsSecurity concerns

- The Department of Home Affairs screens all applications in line with security agencies' guidance, drawing on information provided by security agencies about individuals, documents and characteristics of concern.
 - Setting out full details of the security checking procedures could jeopardise the effectiveness of the process and our ability to obtain information in the future.

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Visa Refusals

- The Department has a non-discriminatory visa framework and the same arrangements apply to all non-citizens applying for an Australian visa, regardless of nationality. Each application is assessed on the individual circumstances of the applicant.
- When assessing Visitor visa applications, the Department takes into account a broad range of circumstances including the situation in the applicant's home country, connections to Australia and incentives to depart Australia.
 - (*if pressed*) Being an immediate family member of an Australian citizen or permanent resident is not a mandatory requirement for a Visitor visa, however, some individuals without ties to Australia or local support may find it difficult to demonstrate that they meet the Visitor visa requirements, including access to sufficient funds for their stay.
- A visa refusal does not prevent an applicant from being granted a visa in the future.

Cancellations

- To be granted a visa, a person must have met all requirements, including health, character and security checks. However circumstances can change and the Department routinely cancels visas where the Department has additional information about the person that was not available when the visa was granted.
- The decision to cancel a visa is not made lightly, a delegate considers the individual circumstances of the person.

Changes to processes for Israelis

- There has been no change to the visa forms that people of any nationality, including Israelis, complete in order to apply for a visa. All visa applications include questions asking if an applicant has undertaken military service.
- In line with standard practice, where further information is required in respect of an individual application including about military service, the Department will request the applicant provides additional information – sometimes by completing another form.
- Processing times can vary due to a range of matters, including whether or not the application lodged was incomplete or required further information. In addition, the requirement that applicants undertake and meet mandatory health, character and national security checks can cause further delays.

Visa pathways

- Having an Australian visa does not mean that the person will choose to or be able to travel to Australia. I am aware that many Visitor visa holders, or former visa holders, in Gaza have been unable to travel while their visa was valid.
- The Australian Government is making available a temporary humanitarian stay visa pathway to Palestinians and Israelis impacted by the Hamas-Israel conflict.
 - The temporary humanitarian stay pathway is by invitation from the Australian government – individuals cannot apply for this visa without an invitation.
 - To be granted a visa, individuals must meet all visa legal requirements, including health, character and security criteria, the same criteria as any other visa applicant.

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- The temporary humanitarian visa pathway enables people to receive a number of social and settlement supports, including work and study rights and income support. In addition, holders of Temporary (Humanitarian Concern) (subclass 786) visas will also have access to Medicare.

Key Data and Statistics

Michael Willard – Group Manager, Immigration Operations

- Between 7 October 2023 and 31 January 2025:
 - the Department granted 10,202 Visitor visas to Israeli citizens who met all requirements. Of these:
 - 64 were in Australia at time of lodgement and
 - 10,138 were outside of Australia at time of lodgement
 - an additional 5,780 migration and temporary visas were granted to Israeli citizens
 - 51.1 per cent were to Israeli women and children
- Between 7 October 2023 and 31 January 2025:
 - the Department granted 2,723 Visitor visas to Palestinian citizens who met all requirements. Of these
 - 18 were in Australia at time of lodgement and
 - 2705 were outside of Australia at time of lodgement
 - an additional 470 migration and temporary visas were granted to Palestinian citizens
 - 65 per cent were to Palestinian women and children
 - the Department refused 7,532 Visitor visas to Palestinian citizens as they did not demonstrate they met all requirements
 - the Department cancelled 44 Visitor visas of Palestinian citizens, on a range of grounds, while the person was offshore. Many of these cancellations were later revoked.

Consultation

- The Chief Data Officer, or their delegate undertaking the Data Clearance function, has cleared the statistics contained within this brief.
- The Refugee, Humanitarian and Settlement Division
- The Character, Cancellation and Case Resolution Division.

Key Brief Number: IG-05

Additional Information

Statistic and Financial Reporting Period:

Statistics Date Ranges – 2025 February Additional Estimates	
Since last hearing	1 October 2024 – 31 January 2025
Financial Year	1 July 2024 – 31 January 2025

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