

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: Final version of invitation rounds minute - EC25-001627 [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]
Date: Thursday, 26 June 2025 8:54:20 AM
Attachments: [EC25-001627 - FINAL cleared.docx](#)
[ATTACHMENT A - Proposal for invitation rounds - FINAL.docx](#)
s. 47C(1)

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

Thanks for catching up with me yesterday, it was lovely to meet you in person!

You mentioned that you were unable to access the invitation rounds minute in PDMS, apologies for this. I undertook to email you the documents so please see the attached including the final minute signed off by AS.

s. 47C(1)

Kind regards,

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Assistant Director
Independent Skills and Innovation Policy
Skilled Visa Branch | Migration and Temporary Visas Division
Department of Home Affairs
E: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [@homeaffairs.gov.au](mailto:s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au)

Please note my work days are Monday-Thursday

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Proposal for invitation rounds - Skilled Independent visas

Background

Skilled migrants make a significant positive impact to Australia's economy. The points tested visa programs, subject to planning levels under the permanent Migration program, are effective in securing migrants with the right skills to address shortages and prepare for our future capability needs. Migrants arriving on a Skilled Independent (subclass 189) visa are invited by the Commonwealth, and are the largest per capita contributors to GDP¹, with the highest participation rate² amongst skilled visa programs. s. 47E(d)

The points test assesses prospective migrants on a set of human capital characteristics, including education, age, English language ability and work experience. These are indicators of long-term success, labour market adaptability, and lifetime net fiscal contribution and economic impact. The platform where Expressions of Interest (EOIs) are submitted, SkillSelect, ranks applicants on their points test score. This ranking is used to guide who the Department issues an invitation to apply for a subclass 189 visa, and the Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) (Family Sponsored) (subclass 491) visa.

Occupation has a strong effect on lifetime earnings, and has a strong association with particular skills, capabilities and education levels. A considered approach to occupation-based selection in invitation rounds is required to capitalise on such opportunities.

During the pandemic, the Department departed from its established process for managing invitation rounds in order to support economic recovery by targeting high priority occupations in critical sectors (healthcare and teaching). There is now an opportunity to design a new process and prioritisation model that is evidence-based, agile, transparent and accountable.

Working across government

s. 47E(d)

¹ September 2023, Jessica Hua, Baily Hepple, Linus Gustafsson (Fiscal Policy Analysis Unit, MAPD), *Analysis of the lifetime economic contribution of permanent migrants*

² s. 47E(d)

³ 2021-22, ABS, *Personal Income in Australia*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/personal-income-australia/latest-release>

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State and Territory governments run their own invitation rounds through access to the EOI pool in SkillSelect, according to their annual allocation of places in the Skilled (Nominated) visa programs. Employers also actively fill vacancies with new permanent migrants using the Employer Nomination Scheme. The Department will monitor State and Territory subclass 190 and subclass 491 invitations and visa lodgements in the Employer Nomination program, to ensure that the Commonwealth is addressing any gaps that arise from jurisdictions and employers targeting the occupations in acute need, rather than those of greatest long-term strategic utility.



S. 47C(1)

Under this framework, invitation rounds would be run frequently on a predictable (e.g. quarterly or monthly) schedule, s. 47C(1)


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Minute

To: Assistant Secretary Skilled Visas Branch
Through: Director Independent Skills, Talent and Business
Cc: Director Skilled and Migration Program
Date: 21 May 2025

Reform of SkillSelect invitation rounds

Timing

Approval is sought by 21 May 2025, to allow sufficient time to update processes and public-facing information before the next invitation round is run in the new Program Year (2025-26).

Purpose

To:

1. Seek approval for the proposed framework to determine the composition, timing and approach to managing SkillSelect invitation rounds for the Skilled Independent (subclass 189) and Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) (Family Sponsored stream) (subclass 491) visas.

Background

2. Skilled migrants make a significant measurable and positive impact to Australia's economy. Research by the Grattan Institute, ANU and Treasury confirms that human capital factors drive the economic outcomes and lifetime fiscal impact of skilled migrants. s. 47E(d)
[Redacted]
3. The points test assesses prospective skilled migrants on a set of human capital characteristics including education, age, English language ability and work experience. These are indicators of long-term success and labour market adaptability.

s. 47E(d)
[Redacted]

² 2021-22, ABS, *Personal Income in Australia*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/personal-income-australia/latest-release>

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4. The platform where Expressions of Interest (EOIs) are submitted, *SkillSelect*, ranks applicants on their points test score. This ranking is used to guide who the Department issues an invitation to apply for a subclass 189 or subclass 491 (Family Sponsored) visa. Invitations are extended at the discretion of the Department of Home Affairs (the Department) or the Minister for Immigration, with authority for recent invitation rounds being sought at SESB2 level.
5. *VM-4988: PI SkillSelect - Expression of Interest for Skilled Migration* outlines the previous approach to managing SkillSelect invitation rounds, including use of occupation ceilings and the issuing of invitations on a monthly basis. The Department departed from this approach during the pandemic, when it became critical to prioritise occupations in high priority sectors.
6. Lower than typical rates of conversion from invitations to visa applications were also observed during this period (30-40% down from 70%³), leading to adjustments in the size and frequency of invitation rounds. Given application rates have recovered to around 74%, the previous approach can now be reviewed.
7. In recent years, invitation rounds have targeted priority occupations in healthcare and teaching. This has been undertaken in consideration of relevant s499 Ministerial Directions in force, although noting that a s499 direction cannot be used to *direct* the Department to issue invitations in a particular manner. Invitation places not filled with priority occupations were extended to a broad range of occupations to ensure the planning levels were met. This work was undertaken due to operational need, but without a formal policy framework or related procedural instruction to assist the Department to explain its approach.

Issues

8. There is an opportunity ahead of the next Program Year (2025-26) to reform the invitation process to ensure it is sufficiently flexible to respond to immediate government priorities, and to bring in the highly skilled workers Australia needs to address shortages before they become acute.
9. By also improving the openness and responsiveness of invitation rounds, the Department can provide greater certainty to skilled migrants, and engage them in the visa application process sooner by seeking to reduce the time between EOI submission and invitation. The average time between submission of an EOI to invitation of the candidate has increased in recent years and not returned to pre-covid averages.

Table 1 – Average time (in days) between EOI submission and invitation

Program Year	Average of Time taken to invitation (days)
2014/15	34
2015/16	59
2016/17	60
2017/18	119
2018/19	176
2019/20	216
2020/21	273
2021/22	361
2022/23	285

s. 47E(d)

³ EC22-006598 – *SkillSelect invitation rounds 2022-23 (November 2022)*

s. 47E(d)

11. To ensure transparency and confidence in the objectives of the points tested visa programs, it is critical that public-facing information is accurate and clearly articulates the decision-making framework and processes used to invite skilled workers to become permanent residents. Public communication about priorities will encourage a higher volume of high human capital candidates to join the EOI pool, and may increase the conversion rate of invitations to visa application lodgements.
12. States and Territories have made repeated representations to the Department requesting greater transparency of the timing and priorities of subclass 189 visa invitation rounds. Analysis of SkillSelect data shows that in 2022/23, 87% of subclass 189 candidates also submitted an EOI for a State and Territory nominated subclass 190 or subclass 491 visa. Due to the lack of clarity of when invitation rounds occur, States and Territories have reported that they have conducted unnecessary assessments and are at risk of expending allocated places on candidates who are invited to apply for a subclass 189 visa.
13. This proposal requires no legislative changes and can be implemented at the Department level using existing delegations. No systems or resourcing impacts have been identified. Key principles of the proposed framework and tiered prioritisation model for invitation rounds is below.

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19. The further detail of the proposed process for managing invitation rounds is at Attachment A.

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Consultation

21. Comments were sought from Skilled Visa Branch, Immigration Outreach and Engagement Branch, Immigration Reform & Engagement Branch, Immigration Planning & Policy Branch, Migration Program & Skilled Refugee Policy.

22.A short communication plan will be prepared to support the new model, led by Immigration Outreach and Engagement Branch.

Recommendations

It is recommended that you:

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Agree that invitation rounds for the Skilled Independent (subclass189) visa generally be held quarterly in 2025/26

Agreed/please discuss

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Agree to the policy area determining priorities and seeking policy authority for invitation rounds annually

Agreed/please discuss

Karin Maier
Assistant Secretary, Skilled Visa Branch
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
25 May 2025

Contact Officer: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Division/branch: Independent Skills, Talent and Business

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

Attachments:

Attachment A: Further guidelines for invitation rounds – Skilled Independent visas

S. 47C(1)

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
To: [Skilled Visa Branch Support](#)
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) [Independent Migration](#)
Subject: RE: MIA meeting briefing [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Wednesday, 4 June 2025 12:49:56 PM
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)
[MIA quarterly meeting - ISIP content.docx](#)

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

Attached are our contributions to the MIA meeting brief request.

Kind regards,

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

Assistant Director | Independent Skills and Innovation Policy
Skilled Visas Branch | Migration and Temporary Visas Division
Immigration Operations Group
Department of Home Affairs
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[Chat with me in MS Teams](#)

Acknowledgement of Country Signature Block Graphic 2022

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- Processing delays for regional visas

Visa	50%	90%
Sc 491	20 months	22 months

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

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MIA meeting briefing - ISIP content

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- Invitation rounds for the Skilled Independent (subclass 189) and Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) (Family Sponsored) (subclass 491) visas are run periodically.
- The next invitation round is provisionally planned for the first quarter of 2025-26 s. 47C(1)

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To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cc: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: FW: EC25-001627 - Invitations Rounds [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Tuesday, 13 May 2025 4:04:56 PM
Attachments: [New approach to invitation rounds - supplementary materials pdf.pdf](#)

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

Lets have a chat about this work and communications – we are looking to implement from July 2025

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

Director | Independent Skills, Talent and Business
Skilled Visas Branch | Migration and Temporary Visas Division
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