

Temporary Suspension of Certain General Skilled Migration (GSM) Visa Applications (Subclass 175, 176 and 475 Only)

The Australian Government has decided to temporarily suspend the acceptance of new applications for certain General Skilled Migration (GSM) visas. The number of pending GSM applications continues to grow as the demand for GSM places exceeds the available supply. The temporary suspension is being implemented to ensure that the occupational profile of applicants for GSM clearly reflects the needs of the Australian labour market.

The temporary suspension will also facilitate the transition from the current Skilled Occupation List (SOL) to the new SOL. It is anticipated that the Government will announce proposed changes to the SOL in May 2010.

The temporary suspension will apply from 8 May 2010. It is expected that it will cease at the end of the 2009-10 program year, that is at the end of 30 June 2010, subject to the approval of the Governor-General in Council of proposed amendments to the *Migration Regulations* 1994 which will enable the implementation of the new SOL.

Temporary suspension means that people will not be able to lodge a valid application for an affected GSM visa for the duration of the suspension. The temporary suspension applies to all primary (main) applicants for the following GSM visas:

- Subclass 175 – Skilled Independent
- Subclass 176 – Skilled Sponsored and
- Subclass 475 – Skilled Regional Sponsored.

Applications for affected visa subclasses submitted on or after 8 May 2010 will be considered invalid and the application will be returned to the client together with the Visa Application Charge (VAC). However, associated fees such as those incurred for medical examinations, English language tests and skills assessments cannot be refunded as these payments were not made to the Government.

Applications for visa subclasses affected by the temporary suspension will be able to be made once the suspension has been lifted. More information on this change and other initiatives affecting the GSM program is available on the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's website at: www.immi.gov.au/skilled/general-skilled-migration/whats-new.htm