



Directing doctors to areas of greatest need

The **Visas for General Practitioners (GPs)** Program helps increase access to GP services in rural, regional and remote areas of Australia. The Program encourages overseas trained doctors to seek positions in communities most in need of primary health care services.

From 11 March 2019, overseas doctors seeking employer sponsored visas to work in Australia are required to obtain a Health Workforce Certificate (HWC) from a Rural Workforce Agency (RWA). HWC's will only be issued for positions in areas where there is genuine need for additional primary health care services. These areas are determined using the Department of Health's Assessment Tool and the Distribution Priority Area classification.

Requirements for employers

Employers nominating a position that will be filled by a doctor who needs an employer sponsored visa to work in Australia are required to obtain a HWC from a RWA. A HWC is issued by the RWA where there is a genuine need to fill a primary health care position at a given location. A HWC is required for an employer sponsored visa in the following three occupations:

- General Practitioner (ANZSCO 253111)
- Resident Medical Officer (ANZSCO 253112)
- Medical Practitioner not elsewhere classified (ANZSCO 253999).

Employers (including hospital employers) will be required to attach the HWC to their nomination application for employer sponsored visas including:

- Temporary Skill Shortage (TSS) (subclass 482) visa
- Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (Provisional) (subclass 494) visa
- Employer Nomination Scheme (ENS) (subclass 186) visa
- Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS) (subclass 187) visa

A visa will not be granted if an employer does not include the HWC in the visa nomination application to the Department of Home Affairs.

Requirements for overseas doctors

Overseas doctors, located both within and outside Australia, who are applying for an employer sponsored temporary, provisional or permanent residence visa, will require a HWC.

Fast-tracked Health Workforce Certificates will be available for the following positions:

- Overseas doctors already working in Australia who continue to work in their current position, in the same location and with the same employer;
- Doctors working in hospital-based settings;
- Doctors working in an Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS);
- Overseas doctors with basic medical qualifications from an Australian university (Australian trained international graduate) who require a visa.

Assessment of positions

RWAs will determine whether an advertised position is located in an area of genuine need for primary health care services by using:

- a Health Workforce Planning Tool (the Assessment Tool) from the Department of Health and
- the [Distribution Priority Area \(DPA\)](#) classification of the position's location.

RWAs will assess positions and provide an endorsement by issuing a HWC where there is a genuine need for additional primary health care services.

RWAs do not assess overseas trained doctors' suitability for a visa. The assessment and endorsement process is designed to be fair and non-discriminatory.

Applying for a Health Workforce Certificate

To apply for a HWC, employers need to complete an online form available at visasforgps.com.au. Alternatively, employers can request an electronic application form to complete and submit to visasforgps@hrplustas.com.au.

The application form must include both the position location and the service type (e.g. Hospital; GP clinic etc).

Information required on a Health Workforce Certificate

- The doctor named on the certificate must be the doctor nominated by the employer for an employer sponsored visa;
- The certificate must be used prior to its expiry date;
- The certificate can only be used for the position nominated by the employer.

If there is any change in circumstance, after the HWC has been issued and prior to lodging the certificate with Home Affairs, employers should contact the RWA for advice.

Further information

The Visas for GPs Program is managed by [HR Plus Tasmania](#) on behalf of the network of RWAs. HR Plus Tasmania organise processing of the application and will issue the HWC to employers as a PDF attachment in an email. Employers will be contacted by HR Plus Tasmania if their application for a HWC is declined.

Employers can contact HR Plus Tasmania on 1800 022 000 for further information about the Visas for GPs Program.

Further information about the Visas for GPs Program is available at visasforgps.com.au and in the Visas for GPs [Program Guidelines](#).