



## 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, employers of 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). For non-hospital based positions, HWCs will only be issued for positions located 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 (including hospital 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. For non-hospital based positions, a HWC is issued by the RWA only where there is a genuine need to fill a primary health care position at a given location. A HWC is required for all employer sponsored visa nominations in the following three occupations:

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

Employers are required to attach a HWC to their nomination application for the following employer sponsored visas:

- 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 in one of the three occupations above, require their sponsoring employer to obtain a HWC and submit it as part of the visa nomination application.

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

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

- Overseas doctors working in hospital based positions
- Overseas doctors already working in Australia who require an employer sponsored visa to continue to work in their current position, in the same location and with the same employer (Employers must be able to demonstrate that the doctor who is in a position of continuing employment has been practicing at the nominated location for at least 12 months. See the Visas for GPs [Program Guidelines](#) for further information.)
- Overseas doctors working in an Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS)
- Overseas doctors with basic medical qualifications from an Australian university (Australian trained international graduate) who require an employer sponsored visa
- Overseas doctors working in an Approved Medical Deputising Service (AMDS).

### **Assessment of non-hospital based positions**

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

- the Department of Health's Health Workforce Planning Tool (the Assessment Tool); 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](https://visasforgps.com.au). Alternatively, employers can request an electronic application form to complete and submit to [visasforgps@hrplustas.com.au](mailto: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 a HWC must be the doctor nominated by the employer for an employer sponsored visa
- HWCs must include the position location
- HWCs must be used prior to the expiry date printed on the certificate
- HWCs can only be used once for the position nominated by the employer.

If there is any change in circumstance, after a HWC has been issued and prior to lodging 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 applications and issue HWCs 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 or at [visasforgps@hrplustas.com.au](mailto:visasforgps@hrplustas.com.au) for further information about the Visas for GPs Program.

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