

## Australia announces new skill list

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**Reacting to the industry voices, the Australian Government has restored the occupations that support growing Australia's research capacity and ensure a thriving scientific and research sector. This will support the nation to continue to thrive as a home for some of the world's most talented scientists and medical researchers, improve its position as a centre for high-quality R&D in medical science and receive the associated spill over benefits.**



The Turnbull Government in Australia has updated the occupations lists for a range of temporary and permanent skilled visas, with the new lists effective from 1 July 2017. The update will ensure the lists continue to reflect genuine skill needs in the labour market.

As part of its reforms to skilled migration announced in April, the Australian Government will update the lists on a six monthly basis to ensure the best outcomes for Australian workers and employers alike. The updated lists are based on extensive consultation with industry and advice from the Department of Employment and the Department of Education and Training.

The Minister for Immigration and Border Protection Peter Dutton said the changes to the lists protect Australian workers, while allowing employers to recruit overseas workers in occupations which are known to be in high demand and face skills shortages in the Australian labour market.

"The Government recognises the importance of enabling Australian businesses to tap into global talent to remain internationally competitive and support a strong national science and innovation agenda," Dutton said.

"The occupation lists are designed to be dynamic. Revisions to the occupation lists are just one element of the Government's reforms strengthening the integrity of Australia's employer sponsored skilled migration programmes and raising the productivity of skilled migrants," he added.

All visa applicants are now required to undergo mandatory criminal checks as part of their application. The exemption to English language testing for subclass 457 visa applicants whose salary is over \$96,400 has been removed, with the exception of employees transferring between a foreign parent company to an Australian arm of the company.

From 1 July 2017, all permanent skilled visas will have tightened English language and lower maximum age requirements. Additional measures will also be introduced to improve the integrity of permanent employer sponsored visas, including removal of some exemptions to mandatory skills and English language testing. Full implementation of the Temporary Skills Shortage (TSS) visa will be complete by March next year.

The TSS visa will include increased English language requirements, stricter labour market testing and a test to ensure employers are not discriminating against Australian workers. From March next year, employers nominating a worker for a TSS visa will be required to pay a contribution to the Skilling Australians Fund to support additional education and training for Australian workers. Employers must continue to show they are making every effort to employ and train Australians in their businesses.

Welcoming the development, six representative organisations - Aus Biotech, Research Australia, Medicines Australia, BioMelbourne Network, Medical Technology Association of Australia (MTAA) and Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes (AAMRI) - which are related to medical technology, biotechnology, research and pharmaceutical sector observed that the revised list of occupations is an important step for which there is significant acknowledgment and relief that the attraction of highly-skilled individuals will not be thwarted and demonstrates continued support for Australia's competitive advantage in life sciences innovation.

In a joint statement the organisations noted that the revised list has provided assurance that important recruitment of outstanding talent can continue consistent with the Australian National Innovation and Science Agenda. Australia will be able to continue to thrive as a home for some of the world's most talented scientists and medical researchers, improve its position as a centre for high-quality R&D in medical science and receive the associated spill over benefits.

Signatory organisations include representatives of the entire life sciences research and commercialisation 'ecosystem', including biotechnology, pharmaceutical and medical technology companies, ranging from start-ups to mature multinationals, research institutes, universities and specialist service professionals.

They further pointed out that they understand the need for the Government to ensure that the visa programme benefits Australia and the scheme must be viewed as a tool to fill the skills gaps that exists in Australia. In this instance, the gaps are in research and industries that create highly-attractive highly skilled jobs, attract clinical research, upskills the local talent pool and grows the local economy.

It may be recalled that Government has made changes to 457 visas earlier this year, in particular, the removal of researcher occupations from the Medium and Long-Term Strategic Skills List, created major concern in the scientific and research community for their potential to impact the recruitment of international research specialists.

In May of this year, organisations associated to science, technology and innovation have joined hands to call for the restoration of these occupations to ensure they could continue to recruit international researchers to fill critical skills gaps, raise their research standing and help train the next generation of Australian researchers. The skilled visa list has now been updated to restore university lecturers, vice chancellors, life scientists, biotechnologists, biochemists, statisticians and microbiologists to the list.

Welcoming the move Professionals Australia CEO Chris Walton said "with the research workforce being a highly mobile one, the policy change to 457 visas had the unintended consequence of restricting the movement and recruitment of research specialists. We are pleased to see that the Government has restored the occupations that support growing Australia's research capacity and ensure a thriving scientific and research sector."

## MEDIUM AND LONG TERM STRATEGIC SKILLS LIST (RELATED TO LIFE SCIENCES INDUSTRY)

Occupation	ANZSCO* code
Life Scientist (General)	234511
Biochemist	234513
Biotechnologist	234514
Botanist	234515
Marine Biologist	234516
Microbiologist	234517
Zoologist	234518
Life Scientists nec	234599
Medical Laboratory Scientist	234611