



AustraliaMigrate Examines Direction 117 Partner Visa Priorities

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AustraliaMigrate, a registered migration agency established in 2000, has published an analysis of Ministerial Direction 117, the instruction that now sets the order in which family and partner visa applications are considered and decided. The direction commenced on 25 July 2026, replacing the previous Ministerial Direction 102, and applies to applications already in the processing queue as well as new lodgements.

Under Direction 117, the highest priority is given to onshore applications for the Partner visa (subclass 820 and 801). Lower priority is given to offshore applications, including the Partner visa (subclass 309 and 100) and the Prospective Marriage visa (subclass 300). Applications assigned lower priority are likely to experience longer processing times than onshore applications, according to the Department of Home Affairs.

"Couples going through this need to understand what changed and what didn't," said Ian Singer, Director and Principal Registered Migration Agent at AustraliaMigrate. "The location of the applicant when the application was made now carries more weight in how quickly a case is looked at. That's a genuine planning factor for

couples deciding whether to lodge onshore or offshore, alongside all the other requirements they need to meet. It doesn't change who qualifies, only the order cases are picked up in."

The analysis notes that Direction 117 sets a broader order across the family visa program, covering applications already subject to ministerial intervention, then partner and dependent child applications, followed by orphan relative, contributory parent, carer, and other parent and family applications in that sequence. A related instrument, Ministerial Direction 103, governs the smaller number of family visa categories that are capped and processed in queue-date order.

AustraliaMigrate's review also covers the limited circumstances in which a Partner visa application can be considered for priority processing. Under Direction 117, an applicant must show special circumstances of a compassionate nature and compelling reasons to depart from the standard order, and a request is only considered once the application is complete. The Department of Home Affairs advises that most requests for priority processing cannot be approved, because other applicants may have equally or more compelling circumstances, and a temporary Partner visa holder generally cannot be considered for priority processing of the permanent stage until two years have passed since they applied for that visa.

Mr Singer said the direction is a reminder that queue position and eligibility are separate questions. "A well-documented onshore application in a busy period is still working from a stronger position than an incomplete one," he said. "Every partner and family visa case turns on individual circumstances, and no agent or direction can guarantee an outcome or a processing time. What a couple can control is the completeness of what they lodge and, where it's genuinely available to them, whether they apply onshore or offshore."

AustraliaMigrate advises applicants and sponsors affected by the change to check which category and priority tier applies to their situation before lodging, and to confirm current processing time estimates directly with the Department of Home Affairs, which updates its guide monthly.

AustraliaMigrate is based in Chatswood, Sydney, and has assisted individuals, families and businesses with Australian visa applications for more than 25 years. The firm's agents are registered with the Office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority and provide advice across partner, family, skilled, employer-sponsored and student visa categories. For more information about the Onshore Partner visa, partner visa options or the new processing priorities, visit the AustraliaMigrate website.

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Australia Migrate Pty Ltd

AustraliaMigrate is a trusted leader in immigration & visa services. Led by Director Ian Singer and a team of five registered migration agents, we provide expert visa solutions for individuals and businesses of all sizes.

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