AustraliaMigrate's 2026-27 Partner Visa Outlook: Preparation Will Define Outcomes

May 18, 2026

CHATSWOOD, NSW - May 18, 2026 -

AustraliaMigrate, the Chatswood-based MARA-registered migration agency founded in 2000 by Ian Singer, has released its 2026-27 outlook for the Australian Partner Visa program. The forecast follows the Department of Home Affairs' April 2026 Partner Processing Newsletter, distributed to registered migration agents on 13 April 2026, which reinforces the Department's longstanding expectation that partner visa applications should be lodged decision-ready and that ImmiAccount is the primary channel for partner visa correspondence. The agency predicts a widening processing advantage for couples who front-load their evidence at lodgement, with corresponding delay concentrated among applications lodged with thin or out-of-date evidence.

The newsletter reinforces several positions that have applied to partner visa applications for many years. Applications should be complete and decision-ready at lodgement, with identity documents, relationship evidence, and sponsor information uploaded at the time of application. ImmiAccount is the primary channel for all partner visa correspondence; emails to the partner visa mailbox receive limited response and are not the recommended way to engage with the Department.

The Department's natural justice practice, established under section 57 of the Migration Act 1958, continues to apply. Where the Department has concerns about an application or identifies missing evidence, applicants are typically allowed to respond before a decision is made. The newsletter draws attention to the importance of monitoring ImmiAccount and responding within the period the Department specifies. For applications under assessment for an extended period, the relationship must remain genuine and continuing at the time of decision, not only at the time of lodgement, and applicants are expected to upload updated evidence as material changes occur, as well as upload evidence on a regular basis after the application, to help strengthen the application.

Partner visas sit within Australia's Family stream, which holds 52,500 places of the 185,000-place 2025-26 Permanent Migration Program. Partner and Child visas are demand-driven, meaning all eligible applications are processed regardless of category pressure.

Current Department indicative processing timeframes show approximately 50% of Subclass 820 (onshore temporary) decisions made within 16 months and 90% within 24 months. The offshore Subclass 309 temporary visa sits at 14 months and 24 to 26 months, respectively. At the permanent stage, assessed after the two-year eligibility waiting period, the onshore Subclass 801 is decided in 8 months for 50% of applicants and 26 months for 90%, while the offshore Subclass 100 runs at 10 months and 21 months. The Subclass 300 Prospective Marriage Visa is approximately 12 to 24 months, and the Subclass 461 New Zealand Citizen Family Relationship Visa remains the fastest pathway at 2 to 6 months.

AustraliaMigrate forecasts these indicative timelines will tighten for well-prepared applications during 2026-27 as the Department continues to prioritise files that are decision-ready on lodgement. The spread between the fastest and slowest decisions, however, is expected to widen, concentrating delay among applications lodged with insufficient or out-of-date evidence.

AustraliaMigrate identifies three patterns it expects to define partner visa applications through 2027. First, the agency anticipates increased use of registered de facto relationships to satisfy the 12-month cohabitation requirement. Relationship registration is currently available in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and the ACT, though Western Australia and the Northern Territory do not yet offer state-level relationship registration. Third, the Subclass 300 Prospective Marriage Visa will continue to be used by couples who have met in person but do not meet the 12-month de facto threshold, particularly across South Asian, East Asian and Sub-Saharan African applicant cohorts. The applicant has to be offshore when the subclass 300 is lodged. It is required that the couple have met in person before a subclass 300 can be lodged.

The agency also expects annual government fee indexation on or around 1 July 2026, in line with standard Department practice. Couples lodging before that date will lock in the current AUD $9,365 base application charge.

"Decision-ready lodgement has been the Department's clear expectation for many years, and the April 2026 Partner Processing Newsletter is a useful reminder of how seriously the Department takes it. Our professional forecast is that the gap between well-prepared and thin applications will widen materially through 2026-27. For a visa that costs AUD $9,365 and shapes a family's future, the cost of preparing the application properly at lodgement is now smaller than the cost of preparing it weakly," says Ian Singer, Director and Principal Registered Migration Agent at AustraliaMigrate, MARN 0001947

AustraliaMigrate's 2026-27 outlook predicts the Subclass 820 onshore pathway will continue to hold a timing advantage at the provisional stage compared with the Subclass 309 offshore pathway, driven by faster document verification and the availability of Bridging Visa A during processing. Couples already onshore on a substantive visa will continue to receive the strongest combination of work rights, Medicare access and decision certainty during the waiting period.

AustraliaMigrate provides decision-ready application preparation across all partner visa subclasses, including 820/801, 309/100, 300 and 461. Full service details, processing time updates and the four-pillar evidence framework are at https://www.australiamigrate.com/visa-types/partner-visa-australia/

The Department of Home Affairs distributed its Partner Processing Newsletter to registered migration agents on 13 April 2026. This update reinforces existing decision-ready lodgement standards, establishes ImmiAccount as the primary communication channel, highlights the importance of timely responses to Department requests, and reiterates the requirement that the relationship remains genuine and continuing throughout processing. Crucially, the newsletter does not change the law or eligibility criteria for partner visa applications. Regarding processing timelines in 2026, approximately 50% of decisions for the onshore Subclass 820 visa are made within 16 months and 90% within 24 months. For the offshore Subclass 309 visa, the comparable figures are 14 months and 24 to 26 months, while the permanent-stage Subclass 801 and 100 assessments take place after the standard two-year eligibility waiting period.

In terms of costs, the base Department application charge for combined Partner Visa applications (Subclass 820/801 or 309/100) is AUD $9,365 as of early 2026, with annual indexation expected from 1 July 2026. Additional charges apply for dependent applicants, health checks, police certificates, and migration advice. For de facto couples navigating the 12-month cohabitation rule, registering the relationship with a state authority in NSW, VIC, QLD, SA, TAS, or ACT can satisfy this requirement, although the relationship must still be genuine and continuing. Western Australia does not currently offer state-level relationship registration, though other limited exemptions apply, such as when the couple has a dependent child.

To evaluate these applications, the Department assesses the four pillars of partner visa evidence to form an overall view on whether the relationship is genuine and continuing. This framework comprises financial evidence (shared bank accounts, joint bills, shared assets), household evidence (cohabitation, shared address, domestic arrangements), social evidence (photos with family and friends, joint travel, statements from family members on Form 888), and commitment evidence (length of relationship, plans, ongoing correspondence).

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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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