AustraliaMigrate Analyses Falling Offshore Skilled Visa Places

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Summary: Registered migration agency Australia Migrate has released an analysis of the 2026?27 Federal Budget, which forecasts net overseas migration falling to 245,000 and leaves around 55,110 permanent places for applicants outside Australia.

Australia Migrate, a registered migration agency established in 2000, has released an analysis of the migration settings in the May 2026 Federal Budget. The Budget holds the permanent migration program at 185,000 places while forecasting net overseas migration to fall to 245,000 in 2026?27 and 225,000 in 2027?28.

According to the Budget papers, around 70 per cent of the permanent program is allocated to the skilled stream. Of the 185,000 total places, 129,590 are reserved for applicants already living in Australia. That leaves approximately 55,110 places for offshore applicants, who now compete for a smaller share of the program than in previous years.

"The headline figure of 185,000 places suggests stability, but the composition of the program has shifted

toward people who are already onshore," said Ian Singer, Director and Principal Registered Migration Agent at Australia Migrate. "An offshore skilled applicant is now competing for roughly 55,000 places against a global pool of candidates. The margin for error in an application has never been smaller."

The Australia Migrate analysis notes that the Department of Home Affairs continues to prioritise applicants with strong points scores, completed skills assessments and occupations in genuine shortage. The agency reports that offshore candidates who lodge an Expression of Interest in SkillSelect without a current skills assessment, verified English test results, and accurate evidence of work experience face longer waits and a lower likelihood of an invitation.

Mr Singer said the falling net overseas migration forecast also signals the direction of future policy. "Treasury is forecasting net overseas migration to drop again in 2027?28. Applicants who are eligible today should not assume the same settings will apply in twelve months. A decision-ready application, lodged early in the program year, puts a candidate in a far stronger position than a rushed submission later on."

The analysis covers the Skilled Independent (subclass 189), Skilled Nominated (subclass 190) and Skilled Work Regional (subclass 491) visas, along with employer-sponsored options that remain open to offshore candidates. Australia Migrate has published guidance on each pathway, including points test planning, skills assessment timing and state nomination strategy, on its website.

As policy settings continue to evolve, the distinction between 'being eligible' and 'being competitive' remains the most critical factor for offshore applicants. Success in the current migration landscape is rarely about meeting baseline requirements alone; it increasingly relies on proactive planning, such as securing state nominations early and aligning individual professional profiles with the specific, shifting demands of priority sectors.

For those navigating these complex pathways, expert guidance becomes an essential asset. Whether managing a skill assessment for a technical trade or strategic visa planning for a high-demand professional role, applicants who invest in comprehensive preparation are significantly better positioned to secure an invitation in a competitive market that now favours precision over volume.

Australia Migrate 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 skilled, employer-sponsored, partner, parent and student visa categories. For more information about skilled visa pathways, or to read the full analysis, 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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