



GMS Flash Alert

Immigration Edition

2021-291 | November 24, 2021



Australia - Border and Travel Restrictions Eased

In this *GMS Flash Alert*, we briefly describe some important recent immigration and coronavirus-related developments in Australia, including, for example, vaccinated eligible temporary visa holders being able to travel to Australia without needing to obtain a travel exemption, expansion of international travel safe zones, and when obtaining a travel exemption is required.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The relaxation on restrictions around travel and quarantine may be welcome news for existing temporary visa holders who have been unable to return to Australia because of the border restrictions, those temporary visa holders in Australia wishing to visit their family and friends overseas without the threat of being unable to return, and for businesses wishing to secure entry to Australia for new employees and transferees.

The rising rates of vaccinations in the region, and worldwide, support the opening of Australia's borders, as the threat of coronavirus transmission falls, as do hospitalisations and death rates.

The situation however remains fluid and it is advisable that travellers consult with qualified immigration professionals.

Removal of Travel Restrictions for Temporary Visa Holders

A significant announcement has been made by the Australian government that from **1 December 2021** fully-vaccinated, eligible, temporary visa holders will be able to travel to Australia without needing to obtain a travel exemption.¹

There are 28 visa types currently listed as "eligible temporary visa holders," including the **Temporary Skill Shortage visa (subclass 482)** and the **Temporary Work (Short Stay Specialist) visa (subclass 400)**.

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“Fully vaccinated” means the individual has completed a course of a Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA)-approved or -recognised vaccine (this includes mixed doses). Current vaccines and dosages accepted for the purposes of travel are:

- Two doses at least 14 days apart of:

- AstraZeneca Vaxzevria	- Sinovac Coronavac
- AstraZeneca Covishield	- Bharat Biotech Covaxin
- Pfizer/Biontech Comirnaty	- Sinopharm BBIBP-CorV (for 18-60 year olds)
- Moderna Spikevax	

- Or one dose of Johnson & Johnson/ Janssen-Cilag COVID vaccine.

At least seven days must have passed since the final dose of vaccine in a course of immunisation for the individual to be considered “fully vaccinated.” Mixed doses count towards being fully vaccinated as long as all vaccines are approved or recognised by the TGA.

Travellers with acceptable proof they cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons and children under 12 can access the same travel arrangement as fully-vaccinated travellers.

KPMG NOTE

It is important to note that whether the travellers are required to complete quarantine is a decision for the individual states and territories, and these requirements should be confirmed prior to travel.

Eligible Visa Holders List

The full list of “eligible visa holders” is as follows:

Subclass 200 – Refugee visa
Subclass 201 – In-country Special Humanitarian visa
Subclass 202 – Global Special Humanitarian visa
Subclass 203 – Emergency Rescue visa
Subclass 204 – Woman at Risk visa
Subclass 300 – Prospective Marriage visa
Subclass 400 – Temporary Work (Short Stay Specialist) visa
Subclass 403 – Temporary Work (International Relations) visa (other streams, including Australian Agriculture Visa stream)
Subclass 407 – Training visa
Subclass 408 – Temporary Activity visa
Subclass 417 – Working Holiday visa
Subclass 449 – Humanitarian Stay (Temporary) visa

Subclass 457 – Temporary Work (Skilled) visa
Subclass 461 – New Zealand Citizen Family Relationship visa
Subclass 462 – Work and Holiday visa
Subclass 476 – Skilled – Recognised Graduate visa
Subclass 482 – Temporary Skill Shortage visa
Subclass 485 – Temporary Graduate visa
Subclass 489 – Skilled – Regional (Provisional) visa
Subclass 491 – Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) visa
Subclass 494 – Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (Provisional) visa
Subclass 500 – Student visa
Subclass 580 – Student Guardian visa (closed to new applicants)
Subclass 590 – Student Guardian visa
Subclass 785 – Temporary Protection visa
Subclass 790 – Safe Haven Enterprise visa
Subclass 870 – Sponsored Parent (Temporary) visa
Subclass 988 – Maritime Crew visa

Source: KPMG in Australia

New International Safe Travel Zones

International safe travel zones have been a topic of much conversation during the SARS-CoV-2 (coronavirus) pandemic. Despite this, Australia has only had a safe travel zone with New Zealand throughout the pandemic, which was paused and reactivated as outbreaks occurred.²

At the time of writing a one-way quarantine-free travel zone exists from New Zealand to Australia, and individuals who have been in either Australia or New Zealand (or a combination of the two countries) over the past 14 days do not need to apply for a travel exemption.

From 21 November 2021, Singaporean citizens who are fully vaccinated are able to travel to Australia without seeking a travel exemption, and quarantine-free to participating states or territories (at the time of writing this includes New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, and Victoria).

To be eligible, travellers must:

- hold a valid Australian visa;
- be fully vaccinated with a completed dosage of a vaccine approved or recognised by Australia’s TGA;
- depart from Singapore and arrive in a participating Australian state or territory;
- provide proof of their vaccination status;
- present a negative COVID-19 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test taken within three days of departure (unless a medical exemption applies).

Eligible travellers will not need to have been in Singapore for 14 days before their proposed travel.

Two new “safe travel zones” have also been announced with Japan and South Korea.³ From 1 December, regardless of the type of Australian visa held, citizens from Japan and South Korea who are considered fully vaccinated will be able to travel to Australia without obtaining a travel exemption.

These arrangements are only accessible to Japanese passport holders travelling from Japan, and South Korean passport holders travelling from South Korea. The traveller does not need to have been in Japan or South Korea for 14 days prior to travelling to Australia.

Australians and Permanent Residents Travelling Away from Australia

From 1 November 2021, *fully-vaccinated Australian citizens and permanent residents* can depart Australia without first needing to obtain a travel exemption⁴. Children under 12 and people who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons are also able to depart Australia without a travel exemption.

Australian citizens and permanent residents who are not fully vaccinated are still required to obtain a travel exemption to depart Australia. Limited grounds for an exemption exist, including:

- travel is as part of the response to the COVID-19 outbreak, including the provision of aid;
- travel is for one’s business/employer;
- travelling to receive urgent medical treatment that is not available in Australia;
- travelling outside Australia for a compelling reason for three months or longer;
- travelling on compelling or compassionate grounds;
- travel is in the national interest;
- ordinarily resident in a country other than Australia.

KPMG NOTE

Australians and Permanent Residents

If Australian citizens or permanent residents have questions or concerns about travelling away from Australia and the applicability of travel exemptions, especially if not fully vaccinated, they are advised to consult with their qualified immigration counsel.

Quarantine, Vaccination, and Coronavirus Testing Requirements

The quarantine, vaccination status, and coronavirus testing requirements can be complex and vary depending on which state or territory in Australia an individual is travelling to. As these requirements continue to evolve quickly, it is important for individuals to seek advice specific to their circumstances. It is also important to not only consider the requirements of the state/territory individuals are flying into initially, but also any states or territories that they may be visiting afterwards, as several interstate restrictions continue to exist.

At the time of writing, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, and Victoria are the only states to offer quarantine-free travel for fully-vaccinated travellers. Other states and territories are expected to follow suit once vaccination rates increase.

What's Next?

Looking ahead to the end of 2021, it is anticipated that travel caps will remain in place for unvaccinated travellers whilst hotel quarantine is mandatory, simply to help ensure that enough hotel rooms are available. For individuals who are fully vaccinated and do not need to hotel quarantine we at the KPMG International member firm in Australia expect to see flight caps removed and restrictions continue to ease.

More broadly, we would anticipate that 2022 will bring a surge of skilled migrants and visitors to address significant labour shortages due to travel restrictions and provide relief to the hospitality and tourism sectors that have been heavily impacted by coronavirus. The announcement regarding the removal of travel restrictions for fully-vaccinated, eligible, temporary visa holders from 1 December is a significant step in the right direction.

FOOTNOTES:

- 1 For more information, please visit: <https://covid19.homeaffairs.gov.au/vaccinated-travellers> .
- 2 For more information on travel zones, see this Australian government website: <https://covid19.homeaffairs.gov.au/new-zealand> .
- 3 For information on travel regarding South Korea and Japan, see:
<https://covid19.homeaffairs.gov.au/korea>
<https://covid19.homeaffairs.gov.au/japan> .
- 4 For more information, please visit: <https://covid19.homeaffairs.gov.au/leaving-australia> .

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RELATED RESOURCE:

This article is excerpted, with permission, from “2021: Where Are We Now, and What’s Next?” (22 November 2021) in *Migration Newsflash*, a publication of the KPMG International firm in Australia.

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