



EOI, SkillSelect & State Nomination 2026

**Step-by-Step Guides for Skilled
Migration to Australia**

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EOI, SkillSelect & State Nomination 2026

Step-by-Step Guides for Skilled Migration to Australia

A practitioner handbook covering Expression of Interest lodgement, the SkillSelect ranking engine, and state and territory nomination programs — with model answers, declaration-risk flags, evidence hierarchies, and Australia–Canada–USA comparative notes.

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25+ Years Helping 10,000+ Families Migrate

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About the Author

Manoj Palwe is a Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant (RCIC R422575), a CAPIC Fellow (R11592), and is MIA Examination Qualified, with more than 25 years of immigration consulting experience and 10,000+ families assisted across Canada, Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, and other destinations.

He is the President of Taurus Infotek, operating under the Dreamvisas brand, with offices in Toronto, Canada and Pune, India. The Dreamvisas practice focuses on educational, training, and professional support for individuals and families navigating skilled migration and study pathways. Manoj has built his consulting practice on a single principle: the right answer for your situation is the one your honest profile and your evidence support, not the answer that closes the largest fee.

Manoj maintains an active digital presence as part of his outreach and education work. His YouTube channel at @ManojPalwe holds more than 600 educational videos with 20,000+ subscribers, covering immigration scenarios across Canada, Australia, Germany, the UK, and the UAE. His LinkedIn profile carries more than 600 professional recommendations from clients and peers.

He writes the Australia, Canada, Germany, USA, UAE, and Specialty Series of immigration handbooks under the Dreamvisas educational publishing program. The complete series spans 108 titles across eight series — Canadian Immigration, Australian Immigration, USA Immigration, UK & Europe, UAE & Gulf, NRI Finance, Healthcare & Professional Sectors, and Specialty Pathways — providing structured handbook coverage of the migration pathways most relevant to skilled professionals and their families.

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All references to fees, processing times, points thresholds, occupation lists, state nomination quotas, and program settings reflect publicly available information current at the time of writing in February 2026. The Department of Home Affairs, state and territory governments, and skills assessing authorities update their requirements regularly. Always verify current requirements on official government websites before lodging applications.

This handbook is general guidance for educational and training purposes. It is not individual legal advice. Comparative notes referencing Canadian (IRCC) and United States (USCIS) practice are provided for context only and do not constitute legal advice in those jurisdictions. Where the text refers to migration regulations, ministerial directions, or policy manuals, those references are summary descriptions and not reproductions of legislation.

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Dedication

*For every skilled professional who has spent late nights staring at the
SkillSelect dashboard,
refreshing for invitation rounds,
and wondering whether the next round will finally be the one.*

This book is for you.

Australia rewards preparation. Let us prepare together.

How to Use This Book

This handbook is a working tool, not a textbook. It is designed for skilled migration applicants preparing an Expression of Interest in SkillSelect and a state or territory nomination application, and for the practitioners and junior staff who support them. The book is most effective when it is used in the order in which migration files actually progress: pre-EOI preparation, EOI lodgement, state nomination, invitation, visa lodgement, and recovery from refusal where it occurs.

Who Should Use This Handbook

Five reader profiles are addressed throughout the book.

- **The offshore professional preparing a first EOI.** You have not yet sat your skills assessment and have not yet decided between subclasses 189, 190, and 491.
- **The onshore applicant on a temporary visa.** You hold a 482, 485, or 500 visa and need a permanent pathway before your current visa expires.
- **The partner or family member of a primary applicant.** Your skills, English level, or local employment may unlock additional points for the primary applicant.
- **The applicant whose first EOI did not produce an invitation.** You have been in the pool for a year or more and need a diagnostic, not a reassurance.
- **The educated layperson comparing destination countries.** You are weighing Australia against Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, and the United Arab Emirates and need to understand how the Australian system actually works.

How to Use the Book in Practice

The intended workflow is the following.

1. **Read the chapters relevant to your stage.** Each major section opens with a Purpose and Risk paragraph that explains what the authority is testing, the most common refusal reasons, and how the section connects to the rest of the migration file. Use those preambles to decide which sections you must read in detail and which you can skim.
2. **Draft your answers in this file or in a copy of it.** Wherever the book sets out a question that appears in SkillSelect or in a state nomination portal, use the model answer and variations to draft your own response. Do not copy the model answer into the portal as written. Adapt it to your own facts and your own voice.
3. **Run each draft through the micro-structure.** For every question, the book provides four standard sections: What They Assess, How to Answer, Examples or Sample Answer, and Do Not Say. Compare your draft against all four before you accept it.
4. **Check the declaration-risk flags.** High-risk areas — employment claims, English test scores, partner skills, relationship status, character disclosures — carry a declaration-risk flag tied to Public Interest Criterion 4020 of the Migration Regulations 1994. Read those flags before you finalise any answer in those areas.
5. **Use the comparative notes for context.** Where a concept is treated differently in Canadian (IRCC) or United States (USCIS) practice, the book contains a comparative note. These notes are useful for clients deciding between destinations and for practitioners who service multi-jurisdiction files. They are context, not legal advice in those jurisdictions.
6. **Run the file through the end-of-book checklists.** Appendix D contains a Pre-EOI Quality Control Checklist and a Pre-Nomination Submission Checklist. Use both before lodgement. The cost of one extra week of preparation is always lower than the cost of a refusal.

A Disclaimer in Plain Language

This book is general guidance, not individual legal advice. The Australian skilled migration system changes constantly. State and territory programs change with each program year and sometimes mid-year. The Department of Home Affairs publishes updated invitation round results monthly. Always verify current requirements on the relevant official government website before lodging anything. Where your situation is unusual or carries elevated risk, retain a registered migration agent or an Australian legal practitioner before you act on what you read in this book.

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Our Other Books on Amazon (Complete Catalogue)

Introduction: Why This Book Exists

Most skilled migration books fall into one of two camps. The first camp is the sales brochure: thirty pages of glossy promises, vague timelines, and a pitch for a consultation at the end. The second camp is the bureaucratic textbook: every regulation reproduced in dense legal language, no clear sense of what to do on Tuesday morning. Neither helps the engineer in Bengaluru, the registered nurse in Manila, or the carpenter in Dublin who needs to know, concretely, what the next step is and why it matters.

This book is the third option. It is a step-by-step practitioner handbook for three of the most consequential pieces of the Australian skilled migration system: the Expression of Interest (EOI), the SkillSelect platform that holds it, and the state and territory nomination programs that can transform a borderline profile into an invitation. These three pieces sit at the heart of the General Skilled Migration program. Get them right, and the rest of the journey is logistics. Get them wrong, and you can wait years for an invitation that never comes.

I have spent more than 25 years guiding families through migration to Canada, Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, and other destinations. Across that time my team has assisted more than 10,000 families. Australian skilled migration is one of the most rule-bound and one of the most rewarding systems we work with. It is rule-bound because every claim must be backed by documentary evidence at invitation. It is rewarding because, when your profile aligns with what Australia is actually looking for in 2026, the system delivers a permanent residence outcome on a defined timetable.

The 2026 program year demands a different mindset from the program years that came before. The Federal Government has held the permanent migration cap steady at 185,000 places, but allocations to state and territory nomination programs have fallen sharply. Jobs and Skills Australia has reshaped the occupation lists into a cleaner Core Skills Occupation List. Ministerial Direction No. 105 still steers priority processing toward regional and healthcare and teaching applications. State

governments have moved decisively away from points-only selection toward selection based on workforce fit, English level, and specific local connections.

The practical effect is this. In 2026, the question "what points do I need" is the wrong question. The right question is "which state, in which occupation, on which pathway, with which evidence, on which date." That question has six variables. This book teaches you to answer all six.

What Has Changed in This Second Edition

This second revised edition restructures the original guide as a practitioner handbook. Every major question that appears in SkillSelect or in a state nomination portal now follows a standard four-part structure: What They Assess, How to Answer, a Sample Answer with variations by reader profile, and Do Not Say. High-risk areas — employment claims, English test scores, partner skills, relationship status, character disclosures — now carry a Declaration Risk flag tied to Public Interest Criterion 4020 of the Migration Regulations 1994. Critical points-test items carry brief Law and Policy Notes pointing to the relevant regulation, ministerial direction, or policy manual. Major themes carry a Comparative Note showing how the same concept is treated in Canadian (IRCC) and United States (USCIS) practice, useful for clients comparing destinations and for practitioners servicing multi-jurisdiction files. The end of the book contains two checklists — Pre-EOI and Pre-Nomination — for file quality control.

A Note on Currency of Information

This book is dated February 2026. Every fee, threshold, processing time, occupation list reference, state allocation number, and pathway requirement reflects publicly available information as of that date. The Australian skilled migration system updates frequently. State governments adjust their priority sectors and pathways at intervals throughout the program year. The Department of Home Affairs publishes invitation round results monthly, and minimum points by occupation move in response to

demand. Skills assessing authorities adjust fees, processing times, and pathway criteria, sometimes with limited notice.

The principles in this book are durable. The numbers are not. Before you act on any specific threshold, fee, or pathway requirement quoted in these pages, verify the current version on the relevant official source. The Department of Home Affairs website at immi.homeaffairs.gov.au is the master source for federal visa rules. Each state and territory maintains its own migration website. Each skills assessing authority publishes its own current fee schedule and processing times.

Now let us begin with the landscape. You cannot navigate a system you do not understand.

PART I

THE LANDSCAPE

What You Are Actually Dealing With

PURPOSE & RISK

Part I builds the conceptual model of the Australian skilled migration system you will need before you fill out a single field in SkillSelect. The risk this part addresses is the most common refusal pattern in skilled migration: applicants who optimise the wrong variable. They chase points instead of state fit, target a saturated occupation instead of a workable one, or assume the published 65-point threshold is the threshold that actually produces invitations. By the end of Part I you will be able to read any forum post, news article, or consultant pitch and tell within thirty seconds whether the speaker actually understands the system.

Chapter 1

The Australian Skilled Migration System in 2026

Australia runs a planned, capped, and points-based skilled migration program. Each of those three words is doing real work, and most newcomers to the system underestimate at least one of them.

Planned

Each financial year, running 1 July to 30 June, the Federal Government sets a Migration Program planning level. For the 2025 to 2026 program year, the planning level is 185,000 permanent places. That figure is split between two streams: the Skill stream, which includes Skilled Independent (subclass 189), Skilled Nominated (subclass 190), Skilled Work Regional (subclass 491), Employer Nomination (subclass 186), business and investor visas, and the Global Talent program; and the Family stream, which includes partner, parent, and child visas. The Skill stream takes the larger share — roughly 132,000 places — and within that share, allocations are split among the visa subclasses. Subclass 189 receives a small allocation, in the range of 16,000 to 18,000 places. Subclass 491 receives the regional allocation, around 33,000 places. Subclasses 190 and 491 together drive the state and territory nomination quotas.

The planning level is the ceiling. It is not a target the Government is racing to fill. If the volume of high-quality applications is below the planning level, places carry forward in the form of unused state quota or a tighter invitation cycle. If demand exceeds the planning level, the Department of Home Affairs simply slows invitations and tightens cut-off scores. Applicants experience this as a system that feels unpredictable from quarter to quarter, but the underlying logic is straightforward: the cap drives the floor, and the floor drives your ranking.

LAW / POLICY NOTE

The Migration Program planning levels are announced as part of the Federal Budget process and are administered under the Migration Act 1958 and the Migration Regulations 1994. Specific subclass allocations are not codified in statute but are exercised through ministerial allocation under the Migration Program. Always verify the current planning level on the Department of Home Affairs website before quoting figures to clients.

Capped

Each occupation on the relevant skilled occupation list also carries an internal cap. Once invitations across all visa subclasses for an occupation reach that cap in a program year, no further invitations issue for that occupation that year, regardless of points or English score. This is why your ranking inside your occupation matters more than your absolute points score. A 95-point applicant in a saturated occupation can still wait a full year for invitation. An 85-point applicant in an undersubscribed occupation can be invited in the next round.

Caps reset on 1 July. The first quarter of each program year — July through September — typically produces the most invitations and the lowest cut-off scores. The fourth quarter — April through June — typically produces the highest cut-off scores and the smallest invitation volumes, because state allocations are exhausted and federal occupation caps approach. Applicants who lodge an EOI in late spring should be prepared to remain in the pool through the next 1 July reset.

Points-Based

Australia uses a transparent points test. Every variable that affects your invitation chances is enumerated in Schedule 6D of the Migration Regulations 1994, the points test for visa subclasses 189, 190, and 491. Age, English language proficiency, skilled employment, qualifications, study in Australia, professional year, credentialed community language, partner skills, and the addition for state or regional nomination — all are

converted to a points score. The minimum score to lodge an EOI is 65 points. The minimum score to actually be invited in 2026 is consistently higher and varies by occupation and visa subclass.

COMPARATIVE NOTE — POINTS-BASED SELECTION

Australia: Australia uses Schedule 6D of the Migration Regulations 1994 to assign points. Maximum age band is 25 to 32 years (30 points). English at the Superior level (IELTS 8.0+ each band) attracts 20 points. The minimum to lodge an EOI is 65; competitive scores in 2026 are 85 to 105+ depending on occupation.

Canada (IRCC): Canada uses the Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS) under the Express Entry framework, with a maximum of 1,200 points. Selection happens through periodic Express Entry draws, with category-based draws for STEM, healthcare, French speakers, and trades. There is no minimum threshold to enter the pool, but competitive CRS scores typically range from 480 to 540 in general draws.

United States (USCIS): The United States does not operate a general points-based skilled migration system. EB-2 and EB-3 employment-based green cards require a specific job offer from a US employer and a permanent labour certification (PERM). The EB-1A and EB-2 NIW categories are merit-based but assessed against statutory criteria, not points.

The 2026 Program Year in Five Numbers

Five numbers define the 2026 program year for the audience this book is written for.

1. **Migration Program planning level: 185,000.** Held flat from 2024 to 2025.
2. **Skill stream allocation: approximately 132,000.** Approximately 71% of the total program.
3. **Subclass 189 allocation: 16,000 to 18,000.** Down from prior peaks; this is the most competitive pathway.
4. **Subclass 491 regional allocation: approximately 33,000.** The largest single pathway in the skilled programme.

- 5. State and territory nomination allocations: down 30 to 40% on prior peak years.** Every state has tightened priority sectors and added local commitment criteria.

The combination of a flat overall ceiling and reduced state allocations is the single most important context for your strategy in 2026. There are simply fewer 190 and 491 places to compete for, and more applicants in the pool. Your file must be measurably better than your competitors' files in your occupation in your target state. That is the mindset this book teaches.

Chapter 2

The Three Visas You Care About: 189, 190, 491

Three visa subclasses sit at the centre of the skilled migration program for the audience of this book. Each has its own eligibility logic, its own point's dynamics, its own state involvement, and its own post-grant obligations. Understanding the differences is the first practical step in choosing your strategy.

Subclass 189 — Skilled Independent

Subclass 189 is the only permanent skilled visa that requires no nomination, no sponsor, and no commitment to a particular state or region. You lodge an EOI, you compete in the pool on points alone, and if invited, you lodge a substantive 189 application. On grant, you receive permanent residence with the right to live and work anywhere in Australia.

The trade-off is competition. Because the 189 has no constraints, every offshore applicant whose occupation appears on the federal list wants the 189. The federal allocation has been reduced in 2026, and recent invitation rounds have been small, often 500 to 1,200 invitations across all occupations combined. Cut-off scores in the most popular occupations — software and applications programmers, accountants, registered nurses (aged care), early childhood teachers — have moved to 95 points and above for offshore applicants.

The 189 should be your target if your occupation is on the Core Skills Occupation List and your honest points score is at or above the historical 189 cut-off for your occupation. It should be your secondary pathway if your score is below cut-off, because state nomination via the 190 or 491 is a more reliable invitation route.

Subclass 190 — Skilled Nominated

Subclass 190 requires nomination by a state or territory government. The nomination adds five points to your EOI for selection purposes. On grant, the 190 is a permanent visa with the right to live and work anywhere in Australia, but it carries a moral and reporting commitment to live and work in the nominating state for a period — usually two years — specified at nomination.

The 190 is the workhorse of the skilled program for applicants between 75 and 95 points. Each state and territory operates its own 190 program with its own occupation list, eligibility criteria, and selection method. Some states use a points-only ranking. Some use a matrix that scores English, work experience, and local ties. Some use a "ready now" filter that prioritises applicants already living and working in the state. Chapter 14 onwards walks through each state and territory in detail.

DECLARATION RISK

The two-year live-and-work commitment for a 190 is enforceable through reporting and reputational consequences with the nominating state, not through visa cancellation in normal cases. However, false statements made in the EOI or in the state nomination portal about your intent to live in the state may engage Public Interest Criterion 4020 of the Migration Regulations 1994. PIC 4020 covers the giving of bogus documents and false or misleading information; a finding triggers a three-year exclusion period from grant of certain visa subclasses. Always state your intent in your own words and back it with concrete evidence — family ties, prior study, employment, a settlement plan that names actual cities — never copy a generic statement of commitment.

Subclass 491 — Skilled Work Regional (Provisional)

Subclass 491 is a five-year provisional regional visa. It requires either state or territory nomination or sponsorship by an eligible relative living in regional Australia. The nomination or sponsorship adds 15 points to your EOI for selection purposes — the largest single point boost in the skilled

program. After three years of compliant residence and work in regional Australia, with at least one taxation year of meeting income thresholds, the 491 holder can apply for permanent residence under subclass 191.

Regional Australia, for the purposes of the 491, is everywhere in Australia except Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane. This is a much broader definition than most applicants realise. Perth, Adelaide, Hobart, Canberra, Darwin, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, Newcastle, Wollongong, and the entirety of regional New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland all qualify as regional. The 491 is therefore not a "rural" visa. It is an "everywhere except the big three" visa, and it offers genuine quality-of-life options.

In 2026, the 491 is the highest-volume pathway in the skilled programme, with allocations in the order of 33,000 places. For applicants with honest scores in the 65 to 85 range and an occupation on a regional list, the 491 is often the most realistic route to permanent residence.

Side-by-Side Comparison

The following table summarises the practical differences. Treat it as a quick reference, not a substitute for the chapters that follow.

- **Nomination required:** 189 — none. 190 — state or territory. 491 — state, territory, or eligible relative.
- **Nomination point boost:** 189 — none. 190 — five points. 491 — fifteen points.
- **Permanent on grant:** 189 — yes. 190 — yes. 491 — no, provisional five-year visa with PR pathway via 191.
- **Geographic constraint:** 189 — none. 190 — moral commitment to nominating state. 491 — must live and work in designated regional Australia.
- **Typical invited score 2026:** 189 — 95 points and above for popular occupations. 190 — 75 to 95 with state nomination. 491 — 65 to 85 with regional nomination.

- **Pathway to citizenship:** 189 — direct after four years residency. 190 — direct after four years residency. 491 — via 191 PR grant, then four years residency.

The right visa for you is the one your honest score, your occupation, and your willingness to commit to a state or region all support. There is no "best" visa in the abstract. There is the visa that will actually issue for your profile in 2026, and the visa that will not.

Chapter 3

How SkillSelect Actually Works as a Ranking Engine

SkillSelect is the online platform run by the Department of Home Affairs through which all EOIs are lodged. Most applicants describe SkillSelect as a queue. That description is wrong, and the wrongness causes real harm. SkillSelect is not a queue. It is a continuous ranking engine, and the difference matters.

What a Queue Would Mean

In a queue, position is fixed by lodgement order. The applicant who lodged at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday is invited before the applicant who lodged at 2:00 p.m. that afternoon. Time in the pool is the dominant variable. New applicants always sit behind older applicants regardless of profile strength. SkillSelect does not work this way at all.

What SkillSelect Actually Does

At each scheduled invitation round, the SkillSelect engine takes a snapshot of all eligible EOIs in the pool. It applies a series of filters: visa subclass, occupation, points score, English level, and Date of Effect. Within each occupation, EOIs are ranked first by total points (highest first), then by Date of Effect (earliest first) as the tiebreaker. The engine then issues invitations from the top of each occupation queue down, until the round's allocation for that occupation is exhausted.

The implications of this design are substantial.

6. **Higher points always beat earlier date.** A 95-point EOI lodged yesterday will be invited before an 85-point EOI lodged two years ago. There is no "fairness" credit for waiting. The pool has no memory.

7. **Date of Effect is a tiebreaker, not a primary variable.** It only matters between EOIs at the same total score, in the same occupation, in the same round.
8. **Updating your EOI changes your Date of Effect.** Adding points (a higher English score, more work experience, partner skills) is unambiguously good. Removing points (turning 33 in age) lowers your score and may push you below cut-off.
9. **There is no cumulative reward for having sat in the pool.** A new 95-point EOI lodged today competes on equal footing with a 95-point EOI lodged two years ago, and the older one wins only on tiebreaker.
10. **Your only lever is your profile, not your timing.** The applicant who reads this book and engineers a stronger profile, even if they enter the pool months after a competitor, will be invited first.

The Date of Effect, Specifically

Your Date of Effect is the date and time at which your current points score was first achieved in your EOI. Lodging a new EOI sets the Date of Effect to lodgement time. Adding a claim to an existing EOI — for example, raising your English score from Proficient (10 points) to Superior (20 points) — resets the Date of Effect to the time the new claim was added, even though your underlying EOI was lodged earlier.

The mechanics are subtle. If you update an EOI to add an English claim and your total points rise from 80 to 90, your old 80-point Date of Effect is lost and your 90-point Date of Effect is the time of the update. This is correct behaviour: at 90 points, you are competing with all other 90-point EOIs, and your tiebreaker is your time at 90, not your time at 80. Updates that increase your score are unambiguously good even with the new Date of Effect, because higher points beat earlier date.

What This Means for Your Strategy

Three strategic principles flow directly from how SkillSelect actually works.

First, prepare before you lodge. There is no benefit to entering the pool with an unfinished profile. A weak EOI sitting in the pool produces nothing; a strong EOI lodged later produces an invitation. Use the pre-EOI work list in Part II of this book.

Second, prioritise updates that add points over the act of lodging. If you can lodge today at 80 points or in three weeks at 90 points after your IELTS result, lodge in three weeks. The three weeks of pool sitting at 80 is worth nothing.

Third, think about your competitors, not your absolute score. The right question is "where will I rank in my occupation in my target state at the next round" — not "do I meet the 65-point threshold."

Chapter 4

The 65-Point Threshold and the Competitive Reality

The published minimum to lodge an EOI in subclasses 189, 190, or 491 is 65 points. This number is correct as a regulatory minimum and almost useless as a planning figure. In 2026, no popular occupation is being invited at 65 points in any visa subclass. Treating 65 as a target invites refusal.

Why 65 Was Set, and Why It Stuck

The 65-point floor was introduced in 2018 as a regulatory adjustment. The Migration Regulations were amended to lift the previous 60-point minimum to 65 in response to demand pressure on the program. The Government has not adjusted the regulatory minimum since, even as actual cut-off scores in invitation rounds have risen well above it. The floor remains 65 because the Migration Regulations have not been amended; the practical cut-off rises in invitation rounds because the engine selects highest first and stops at the round allocation.

LAW / POLICY NOTE

Schedule 6D of the Migration Regulations 1994 prescribes the points test for subclasses 189, 190, and 491. The 65-point regulatory minimum is set out in the Department of Home Affairs policy and reflected in invitation round eligibility filters. Read together with Ministerial Direction No. 105, which prioritises healthcare, teaching, and regional applications for processing.

What "Competitive" Actually Means in 2026

Competitive cut-off scores by visa subclass and occupation, based on invitation round data through January 2026, look approximately as

follows. Treat these as moving averages, not promises. They are the right order of magnitude for planning, not exact thresholds.

- **Subclass 189, popular occupations (software programmers, accountants, civil engineers, RNs aged care):** 95 to 105 points to be invited in the next two to three rounds.
- **Subclass 189, less competitive occupations (chemical engineers, social workers, geologists):** 85 to 95 points.
- **Subclass 190, varies sharply by state:** 75 to 95 points with nomination, including the five-point nomination boost.
- **Subclass 491, regional pathways:** 65 to 85 points with nomination, including the fifteen-point nomination boost.
- **Healthcare and teaching occupations under MD No. 105 priority processing:** cut-offs run five to ten points lower than general occupations because of priority allocation.

The Three Errors of the 65-Point Mindset

Applicants who treat 65 as a target make three predictable errors.

The first error is lodging too early. They reach 65 and submit immediately, before completing higher English, before adding partner skills, before applying for state nomination. The result is a stale EOI sitting in the pool while better-prepared applicants are invited around them.

The second error is target-state confusion. They focus on absolute points and ignore that state nomination programs select on different criteria. Victoria and New South Wales weigh local employment heavily. South Australia weighs prior settlement. Tasmania weighs Tasmanian study. A 90-point applicant with no Victorian ties is not a strong Victorian candidate, even though the 90 score is comfortably above any cut-off threshold.

The third error is sunk-cost reluctance. Having lodged at 65, they refuse to update or restart for 18 months because they "are already in the pool."

They are in the pool, but they are not being invited. The pool has no memory of their patience. Restart, or strengthen, or pivot.

A Realistic Score-by-Score Diagnostic

Use the following diagnostic to assess your current EOI in February 2026.

- **Below 65 points:** You cannot lodge. Work the pre-EOI worklist in Part II until you reach 65.
- **65 to 74 points:** You are eligible to lodge but realistically only invitable through 491 regional or 190 with strong state ties. Do not target 189.
- **75 to 84 points:** You are competitive for 190 in some states and 491 most regions. You are unlikely to be invited for 189 in popular occupations.
- **85 to 94 points:** You are competitive for 190 in most states and may be invited for 189 in less competitive occupations. Track invitation round patterns for your occupation closely.
- **95 points and above:** You are competitive for 189 in popular occupations and a strong candidate for 190 nationally. Lodge promptly and monitor for invitation in the next two to three rounds.

That is the competitive reality. The 65 threshold is a regulatory minimum and not a planning number. The next part of this book teaches you how to engineer the highest honest score your profile supports.

PART II

BEFORE YOU TOUCH SKILLSELECT

Your Pre-EOI Work list

PURPOSE & RISK

Part II covers the work that must be complete before you log in to SkillSelect at all. The risk this part addresses is the most expensive avoidable error in skilled migration: lodging an EOI with claims you cannot evidence at invitation. Every claim in your EOI is a claim you must prove with documents within sixty days of an invitation. Skills assessment must be in hand. English scores must be within validity windows. Work experience must be capable of being documented to the standard of the relevant assessing authority. Calculating points honestly before you lodge — and refusing to claim points you cannot evidence — is the single most important quality control step in the entire process.

Chapter 5

Choosing the Right ANZSCO Code

Every skilled migration claim begins with a single decision: which Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) code best describes the work you actually do. Get this wrong and every subsequent step — skills assessment, EOI lodgement, state nomination — collapses. Get this right and the rest of the file falls into place.

What ANZSCO Is, and What It Is Not

ANZSCO is a six-digit occupational classification maintained by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Each ANZSCO code maps to an occupation title, a skill level (1 through 5, with 1 being highest), a list of typical tasks, and a set of typical qualifications. Australian skilled migration uses ANZSCO codes at the four-digit, five-digit, or six-digit level depending on the visa subclass and the assessing authority.

ANZSCO is not your job title. It is the closest match between the work you actually perform and the standardised task descriptions in the classification. A "Lead Software Engineer" job title might map to ANZSCO 261313 (Software Engineer) or 261311 (Analyst Programmer) or 135112 (ICT Project Manager) depending on what you actually do day to day. The assessing authority — the body that decides whether your skills assessment will issue positively — looks at your duties, not your title.

The Three Lists That Matter in 2026

Three federal occupation lists govern eligibility in 2026.

11. **Core Skills Occupation List (CSOL).** Introduced in late 2024 to consolidate prior lists, the CSOL is the master list for the new Skills in Demand subclass 482 employer-sponsored visa. It feeds

into general skilled migration eligibility for many occupations and replaces the medium and long-term strategic list (MLTSSL).

12. **Specialist Skills List.** A narrower list of high-demand specialist occupations earning above the Specialist Skills Income Threshold. Relevant primarily for employer-sponsored pathways but informs federal allocation decisions.
13. **Regional Occupation Lists.** Each state and territory publishes its own regional list for nomination purposes. These lists vary substantially across jurisdictions and update through the year.

Subclass 189 draws from a federal list. Subclasses 190 and 491 draw from state-specific lists overlaid on federal eligibility. An occupation on a federal list but not on any state list is invitable only via 189. An occupation on no federal list is not eligible for skilled migration at all.

THE QUESTION: "Which ANZSCO code should I select for my EOI?"

What They Assess

The Department of Home Affairs assesses whether the ANZSCO code in your EOI matches the work demonstrably performed in your evidenced employment history, and whether the assessing authority has issued a positive skills assessment for that exact code. State and territory governments assess whether the code is on their current nomination list and on their priority sector list.

How to Answer

- Start with the work, not the title. List your actual day-to-day tasks in plain language, then match those tasks to ANZSCO task lists at the four-digit and six-digit level.
- Cross-check against the assessing authority. The relevant assessing authority for that code (ACS for ICT, EA for engineers, CPA Australia or IPA for accountants, AHPRA for health practitioners, and so on) will issue or deny based on its own interpretation of the code.

- Compare the code against current state lists. A code on the federal list but on no state list is 189-only.
- Verify the code is on the version of the list current at lodgement. Lists update mid-year; do not rely on a list snapshot from six months ago.

Do Not Say

- Do not pick the code with the highest invitation rates if your duties do not match it.
- Do not pick a code because a friend in the same job picked it; their employer letter may evidence different duties from yours.
- Do not split duties between two codes hoping for the more favourable assessment.

SAMPLE ANSWER — Selecting an ANZSCO code (software professional)

I am applying under ANZSCO 261313, Software Engineer. My duties for the most recent five years include designing, developing, testing, and maintaining backend systems in Python and Go for a financial services platform; modifying existing software to correct errors and improve performance; and reviewing software designs and code from junior team members. These duties match the ANZSCO 261313 task list. The Australian Computer Society is the relevant assessing authority for code 261313, and my positive ACS assessment dated 12 November 2025 confirms the assessment outcome at this code.

VARIATIONS BY PROFILE

Registered Nurse: *I am applying under ANZSCO 254418, Registered Nurse (Aged Care). My duties since June 2021 include assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation of nursing care for older adults in a residential aged-care setting; medication administration; coordination of allied health input; and supervision of enrolled nurses and care assistants. AHPRA is the assessing authority and my registration as a Registered Nurse is current and unrestricted.*

Civil Engineer: *I am applying under ANZSCO 233211, Civil Engineer. My duties for the past four years include designing structures for transport*

infrastructure projects, preparing engineering specifications, supervising site works, and conducting safety reviews. Engineers Australia is the relevant assessing authority and I have completed the CDR pathway with a positive outcome at code 233211.

Cook (trade-skilled): *I am applying under ANZSCO 351411, Cook. My duties since 2020 include planning menus, preparing and cooking food, supervising kitchen staff, and ensuring compliance with food safety standards. Trades Recognition Australia is the relevant assessing authority and my positive TRA outcome dated 03 February 2026 confirms a Certificate III equivalent in Commercial Cookery against the ANZSCO 351411 task list.*

DECLARATION RISK

Selecting an ANZSCO code that does not match your demonstrably evidenced duties is the single most common reason for negative skills assessments. A negative assessment cannot be quietly withdrawn and re-lodged at a different code without disclosure. Subsequent applications must declare the prior negative assessment, and undisclosed prior assessments engage Public Interest Criterion 4020 of the Migration Regulations 1994 — the misleading information criterion that triggers a three-year exclusion period. Always select the code your evidence supports, not the code with the most favourable invitation pattern.

Practical Strategy When Two Codes Could Apply

Sometimes a candidate genuinely fits two ANZSCO codes — for example, a senior developer who has migrated into a hybrid technical-management role might fit both 261313 and 135112. In that case, three principles apply.

First, choose the code that matches the duties you can evidence in employer letters and contracts for the qualifying period. The assessor reads the letters, not your CV.

Second, choose the code with stronger invitation patterns in your target visa subclass and target state. Within the boundaries set by the first principle, pick the more favourable code.

Third, accept the assessing authority's discretion. ACS, EA, and the others sometimes assess at a different code than the one applied for. Read the assessment outcome carefully; the outcome code is the code you must use in your EOI, not the code you originally requested.

Chapter 6

Skills Assessment: Your Gatekeeper

A positive skills assessment is the gatekeeper of every points-based skilled migration claim. Without one, you cannot lodge an EOI for the 189, 190, or 491. Skills assessment is administered not by the Department of Home Affairs but by the relevant assessing authority for your nominated occupation. There are more than thirty assessing authorities, each with its own pathways, fees, processing times, and document standards.

Major Assessing Authorities and Their Realities

The big-volume assessing authorities most readers of this book will deal with are the following.

Australian Computer Society (ACS) — ICT occupations

ACS administers assessment for ICT codes including 261313 Software Engineer, 261311 Analyst Programmer, 261312 Developer Programmer, 263111 Computer Network and Systems Engineer, 262112 ICT Security Specialist, and 135112 ICT Project Manager among others. ACS deducts a number of years from the start of your work history to establish "ACS suitability" — typically two years for an ICT-major degree, four years for a non-ICT degree, six years for non-ICT qualifications with a Recognition of Prior Learning pathway. The deducted years do not count for points; only the years after the deduction date count. ACS fees are around AUD 540 for a skills assessment, with processing times typically eight to twelve weeks.

Engineers Australia (EA) — engineering occupations

EA assesses civil, mechanical, electrical, electronic, chemical, and other engineering codes. EA accepts three pathways: the Washington Accord (for accredited bachelor degrees from signatory countries), the Sydney Accord (for engineering technologist programs), and the Competency

Demonstration Report (CDR) pathway for non-accredited qualifications. The CDR pathway requires three career episodes and a continuing professional development log. CDR processing is typically twelve to sixteen weeks for the Fast Track service.

AHPRA — registered health practitioners

The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency administers registration for all regulated health professions, including registered nurses, medical practitioners, physiotherapists, pharmacists, and dental practitioners. AHPRA registration is both a regulatory requirement to practise in Australia and the de facto skills assessment for skilled migration purposes. Internationally trained nurses must complete an Outcomes-Based Assessment (OBA) or a bridging program before registration. Doctors face a longer pathway involving the AMC examinations and supervised practice.

CPA Australia, IPA, CA ANZ — accountants

Three bodies assess accountants. CPA Australia and Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand are the larger; the Institute of Public Accountants offers an alternative pathway. All three require a competency assessment of qualifications against a set of core knowledge areas. English score requirements for the assessment are stricter than for visa eligibility — typically IELTS 7.0 each band or equivalent. Pre-2026 changes have tightened the document requirements; transcripts must be original and the qualification must be at bachelor level or higher.

Trades Recognition Australia (TRA) — trade occupations

TRA assesses trade occupations including cooks, carpenters, electricians, motor mechanics, and many others, through the Job Ready Program (for onshore applicants), the Offshore Skills Assessment Program for designated countries, or pathway-specific routes. The Job Ready Program is a four-stage pathway over twelve months and is generally only realistic for applicants already in Australia on a 485 or similar visa.

VETASSESS — broad professional and technical occupations

VETASSESS is the catch-all assessing body for many professional and technical occupations not covered by the specialist authorities above. It assesses chefs, marketing specialists, management consultants, social workers (in some pathways), and many others. VETASSESS Priority processing is typically ten business days; standard processing runs ten to twelve weeks.

THE QUESTION: "How do I prepare a skills assessment that will be positive on first attempt?"

What They Assess

The assessing authority assesses whether your qualifications and employment history evidence the skill level required for the nominated ANZSCO code. They examine the genuineness of your qualifications and employment, the match between your duties and the ANZSCO task list, and the documentary trail evidencing employment.

How to Answer

- Read the assessing authority's most recent applicant guidelines in full, including any annexes specific to your code. Most negative assessments turn on a guideline the applicant did not read.
- Match your evidence to the guidelines, not the other way around. If the guideline asks for original transcripts certified by the issuing institution, do not submit a notary-certified copy.
- Get employer letters that describe your duties in the language of the ANZSCO task list, signed by an HR officer or direct manager on company letterhead, with company seal where relevant.
- Build the documentary chain: contracts, monthly payslips for the qualifying period, tax records, social insurance or PF/EPS records, and bank statements showing salary credit. Authorities increasingly cross-check this chain.

- Submit at the earliest moment your evidence is complete, not when "perfect." A thirteen-week wait for an assessment is normal; lodgement delays compound across the rest of the file.

Do Not Say

- Do not list duties from a generic ANZSCO task list as your own work without verifying that you actually performed them.
- Do not submit experience letters that describe duties you cannot match in payslips and tax records.
- Do not request the assessing authority "interpret" weak evidence in your favour; their job is to assess, not advocate.

LAW / POLICY NOTE

Skills assessment is a precondition under regulation 2.26AC of the Migration Regulations 1994 for points-based skilled visas. The Department of Home Affairs has a separate discretion to evaluate the genuineness of claims at visa application stage even after a positive assessment. A positive assessment is necessary, but not sufficient, for visa grant.

COMPARATIVE NOTE — SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Australia: A positive assessment from the relevant assessing authority is mandatory before EOI lodgement for points-based skilled visas. Most authorities issue a written assessment outcome valid for three years for visa lodgement purposes.

Canada (IRCC): IRCC requires an Educational Credential Assessment (ECA) for foreign-earned credentials in Express Entry, but uses NOC TEER codes rather than occupation-specific assessing authorities. Work experience is verified at the visa application stage, not by a separate assessing authority. Some regulated professions also require provincial regulatory body approval before practising.

United States (USCIS): USCIS does not run a centralised skills assessment for EB-2 or EB-3. Educational credentials are assessed by private credential evaluation services for evidentiary purposes, but the petitioner (employer) carries the substantive burden of evidencing the position requirements and the beneficiary's qualifications under PERM and I-140 procedures.

What to Do With a Negative Skills Assessment

A negative skills assessment is not the end of the file, but it is a serious event. Three pathways exist.

First, a review or appeal with the assessing authority. Most authorities offer an internal review process that re-examines the evidence on the original file. Reviews work where the negative outcome was based on a documentation gap that can be filled, not where the underlying duties do not match the code.

Second, a fresh application at a different ANZSCO code. This must be disclosed; assessing authorities and the Department of Home Affairs share information about prior negative outcomes. A different code with genuinely better-matched duties can succeed where the original failed.

Third, a pivot to a different visa pathway that does not require a points-based skills assessment. Subclass 482 employer-sponsored visas use occupation eligibility rather than a Department-administered points assessment. Some onshore pathways use different criteria entirely.

Chapter 28 covers the negative-assessment recovery decision tree in detail.

Chapter 7

English Language Testing: Squeeze Every Point

English testing is the single highest-leverage variable in your points score. Moving from Competent (six points minimum eligibility, zero point bonus) to Proficient adds ten points to your EOI. Moving from Proficient to Superior adds another ten points. Twenty points sit on the table for the applicant who does the work of preparing properly.

The Four Approved Tests

The Department of Home Affairs accepts four English tests for skilled migration: IELTS Academic, PTE Academic, TOEFL iBT, and OET (for healthcare occupations only). Cambridge C1 and C2 Advanced (formerly CAE/CPE) are accepted for some employer-sponsored pathways. The minimum scores for each English level appear in the table below.

- **Competent English (6-point eligibility, no points bonus):** IELTS 6.0 each band, PTE 50 each section, TOEFL listening 12 / reading 13 / writing 21 / speaking 18.
- **Proficient English (10 points):** IELTS 7.0 each band, PTE 65 each section, TOEFL listening 24 / reading 24 / writing 27 / speaking 23.
- **Superior English (20 points):** IELTS 8.0 each band, PTE 79 each section, TOEFL listening 28 / reading 29 / writing 30 / speaking 26.

Test results are valid for three years from the date of the test for skilled migration purposes. Plan your test timing so that the result is current at both EOI lodgement and visa lodgement.

IELTS vs PTE: A Practical Comparison

Most applicants choose between IELTS Academic and PTE Academic. Each has practical advantages.

IELTS Academic is the older test and the most familiar to candidates. The speaking module is conducted face-to-face with a human examiner, which suits candidates who are confident speaking and find machine-marked speaking tests artificial. The writing module is human-marked, with the trade-off that human marking introduces variability between sessions. IELTS results are typically released in thirteen days for paper-based and three to five days for computer-delivered.

PTE Academic is fully computer-administered and machine-marked. The speaking module records you reading aloud and answering prompts; there is no live examiner. The marking is fast — results often arrive within forty-eight hours. PTE's machine-marking is more consistent than IELTS human marking, which works in your favour if you score consistently and against you if you have one weak band. Many candidates who plateau at IELTS 6.5 in writing find they reach PTE 65 (the equivalent) more easily because of how the machine-marking weighs different types of evidence.

My practical recommendation: take a free or low-cost mock test in both formats before you book the real one. Choose the format you score better in. Do not assume one format is universally easier; it depends on your specific weak band.

THE QUESTION: "I am at IELTS 6.5 average. Should I push for Superior?"

What They Assess

The assessor at invitation reads only your score on each band against the regulatory threshold for each English level. The assessor does not consider your test history, the gap between bands, or the difficulty of the test centre at which you scored.

How to Answer

- Calculate the points value of moving from your current level to the next. Each level is worth ten points. In a competitive 2026 invitation environment, ten points is often the difference between invitation in the next round and a year of pool sitting.
- Time-block four to six weeks of focused preparation against the next level. Do not test until practice scores are consistently at the target level, not at the prior level.
- Identify your weakest band and prioritise it. Most candidates know their weakest band already; if not, two diagnostic mocks will identify it.
- Use task-specific preparation: writing task 2 templates that score consistently, listening practice with note-taking, speaking practice with timed responses to typical prompts.
- Take the test in a higher-volume test centre with more frequent dates so a re-take can be scheduled within two weeks.

Do Not Say

- Do not assume your last result will hold at the next test; English scores are not stable without practice.
- Do not test with the same provider repeatedly hoping for variance; do focused preparation and test when ready.
- Do not declare a Superior claim in your EOI without a current test result; provisional or "expected" scores cannot be claimed.

SAMPLE ANSWER — How to plan a Superior English push (offshore software engineer)

My current IELTS result is L 7.5, R 7.5, W 6.5, S 7.5 — Proficient (10 points) due to writing. To unlock Superior (20 points) I need 8.0 in every band. My plan: I will book six weeks of structured prep, focusing 70% on Writing Task 2 with daily timed practice and weekly feedback from a tutor, 20% on Speaking with recorded responses to past prompts, and 10% on continued L and R maintenance. I will sit a full mock in week 4. If I score 7.5 to 8.0 in writing in the mock I will sit the real test in week 6; if not, I will extend by

two more weeks. I will not lodge an EOI relying on a Superior claim until the test result is in hand.

DECLARATION RISK

Claiming an English point level you cannot evidence with a current valid test result is a misrepresentation. The Department of Home Affairs verifies test results directly with IELTS, PTE, TOEFL, and OET test administrators at invitation and again at visa decision. False or expired test references engage Public Interest Criterion 4020 — the misleading information criterion that triggers a three-year exclusion from grant of certain visa subclasses. Always claim the level your current valid test supports.

Test Validity, Expiry, and Stacking

Test validity has two distinct dimensions in skilled migration. First, the test result must be valid at the date of EOI claim — typically requiring the test was sat within three years before the date of effect of the relevant claim. Second, the test must remain valid at visa application lodgement, which can be up to sixty days after invitation. Tests close to expiry should be re-sat before EOI updates that depend on them, to avoid timing failures during the 60-day window.

Some candidates "stack" tests by holding a Superior result in three of four bands and a Proficient in the fourth, with a plan to re-test only the weak band. This works for credentialed community language and partner skills points, but for primary applicant English the lowest band sets the level. A 7.5 in writing with 8.0 in all other bands scores Proficient (10 points), not Superior, until the writing band is brought to 8.0.

Chapter 8

Documenting Your Work Experience the Right Way

Skilled employment points are usually the largest single category of points in your score. They are also the category most often disputed at skills assessment and at visa decision. The applicant who builds a clean documentary chain for every claimed year wins; the applicant who relies on a single experience letter for five years of employment loses, regardless of how the experience letter reads.

The Critical Distinction: Points-Claimable vs Total Career

Skilled migration distinguishes sharply between two concepts that beginners conflate.

Total Career History

Your total career history is every job you have held since you started working, regardless of whether the role was skilled, was at the ANZSCO code you are claiming, or was paid. Total career history must be disclosed in full in the EOI — Form 80 and Form 1221 require complete chronological coverage with no gaps. Failing to disclose a job from twelve years ago, even if it is not points-claimable, is a misrepresentation that engages PIC 4020.

Points-Claimable Skilled Employment

Points-claimable skilled employment is the subset of your work history that meets all of the following criteria simultaneously.

14. It was paid at, or above, the equivalent of fifty percent of the Australian standard full-time minimum wage in the relevant period.

15. It was at the ANZSCO skill level for the nominated occupation (typically skill level 1, 2, or 3 depending on the code).
16. It was performed after the date the assessing authority deducts as the start of "skilled" employment for assessment purposes (the ACS deduction date for ICT, the EA assessment date for engineers, or as specified by the relevant authority).
17. It is evidenced by an unbroken documentary chain: contracts, payslips, tax records, social insurance contributions, and bank statements showing salary credits.

In the EOI, only points-claimable skilled employment generates points. The rest of your career history is reported but does not contribute to the points score.

The Evidence Hierarchy

Skills assessing authorities and Department of Home Affairs case officers apply an evidence hierarchy when assessing claimed employment. From most persuasive to least persuasive:

- **Tier 1 — Government tax records.** Income tax returns and Form 16 / W-2 / equivalents from the country of employment, showing employer name, salary, and tax paid. Cannot be fabricated retrospectively.
- **Tier 2 — Statutory contributions.** Provident fund (PF/EPF in India), social security records (SSC in Pakistan, SSS in Philippines), superannuation in Australia. Government-administered records are exceptionally strong evidence.
- **Tier 3 — Salary bank statements.** Monthly bank statements for the entire claimed period showing salary credits matched to the employer name. Address mismatches and account changes must be explained in writing.
- **Tier 4 — Monthly payslips.** Original or PDF-signed payslips showing employer details, gross pay, deductions, and net pay. Continuity matters; assessors notice gaps.

- **Tier 5 — Employment contracts.** Original signed contracts including start date, position, salary, and notice provisions. Contract amendments and promotion letters add weight.
- **Tier 6 — Employer reference letters.** Letters describing your duties, period of employment, position, and salary, on company letterhead, signed by an authorised HR officer or direct manager, with contact details for verification.

A well-prepared file includes evidence from every tier for every claimed year. A weak file relies on Tier 6 alone. Authorities increasingly call employer references for verification or, in higher-risk cases, send a verification visit to the employer's premises through a designated agent. Evidence built only on letters does not survive verification.

THE QUESTION: "How do I describe my employment in the EOI and supporting documents?"

What They Assess

The case officer assesses whether the claimed employment generates the claimed points, whether the employment was at the nominated ANZSCO skill level, and whether the documentary chain is unbroken and consistent. Inconsistency between the EOI, Form 80, the skills assessment, and the supporting documents is the single most common refusal trigger.

How to Answer

- Be precise on dates. Day and month and year for start and end of every employment, with no gaps and no overlaps. If you have gaps, document them — study, parental leave, unemployment with job-search records.
- Use the same job titles and date ranges in every document. EOI, Form 80, skills assessment application, and CV must match exactly.
- Quantify wherever possible. "Managed a team of 8 backend engineers across two products" is verifiable; "Led a team" is not.

- Mirror the ANZSCO task list in your duty descriptions, but only if you actually performed those duties. Where you did not perform a listed duty, leave it out.
- Where the role was overseas and the employer no longer exists, gather any available secondary evidence: tax records, bank statements, social insurance contributions, contemporary correspondence, and statutory dec from a former colleague.

Do Not Say

- Do not round dates to the nearest month if precise dates are available; precision evidences accuracy.
- Do not describe duties using marketing language ("transformative leader," "passionate problem-solver"); describe what you did.
- Do not claim a higher position than you held; the assessor checks payscale against the position.

SAMPLE ANSWER — Documenting employment (engineer overseas, claiming five years)

I claim five years of skilled employment as a Civil Engineer (ANZSCO 233211) at XYZ Consulting Engineers Private Limited, Pune, India, from 15 March 2020 to 14 March 2025. I was employed full-time at 45 hours per week and earned an annual salary equivalent to AUD 32,400 in the final year (above the fifty percent minimum wage threshold). My duties included structural design of three highway overpass projects, preparation of engineering specifications, supervision of site works, and review of junior engineers' designs. Evidence supporting this claim includes: contract dated 02 March 2020 signed by the Managing Director and me; sixty monthly payslips for the entire period; salary bank statements from HDFC Bank account ending 4421 showing monthly credits; Form 16 tax certificates for assessment years 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025; Provident Fund passbook entries; and an employer reference letter dated 28 January 2026 from the Director of Engineering describing my duties.

DECLARATION RISK

Employment claims are the most heavily verified category in skilled migration. The Department of Home Affairs and skills assessing authorities cross-check by:

- Calling employer HR departments at the contact number on the reference letter;
- Ordering on-site verification through a designated agent in higher-risk cases (common for India, Philippines, Pakistan);
- Checking statutory registers (PF, ESIC, social insurance) against claimed dates;
- Comparing tax records against claimed salary;
- Checking employer registration records against claimed business address.
-
- Any finding of inflated duties, fabricated periods, or inconsistent documents engages Public Interest Criterion 4020 — three-year exclusion. Build the documentary chain from Tier 1 down before you draft the EOI claim, not after.

COMPARATIVE NOTE — WORK EXPERIENCE VERIFICATION

Australia: The Department of Home Affairs verifies through tax records, statutory contributions, payslips, contracts, and reference letters in that hierarchy. On-site verification is increasingly common for India, Pakistan, and Philippines applicants.

Canada (IRCC): IRCC verifies through reference letters, contracts, T4/equivalent tax forms, and where required, Procedural Fairness Letters seeking further evidence. NOC code consistency between Express Entry profile, work permit history, and reference letters is heavily scrutinised. Misrepresentation findings attract a five-year inadmissibility under section 40 of the IRPA.

United States (USCIS): USCIS evaluates work experience claims at the I-140 stage primarily through letters from prior employers describing duties at the level required for the petition, supplemented by tax records (W-2s) and pay stubs. Inconsistencies in dates or duties may trigger a Request for Evidence (RFE) or Notice of Intent to Deny (NOID).

Chapter 9

Calculating Your Points Honestly

A point's calculation is not arithmetic. It is a discipline. The discipline is to list every claim you intend to make in the EOI, identify the documentary evidence that will support each claim at invitation, and refuse to claim any points you cannot evidence to the standard the case officer will apply. Done well, the point's calculation is the most important hour you spend on your application. Done poorly, it sets up a refusal twelve months later.

The Points Categories in Schedule 6D

Schedule 6D of the Migration Regulations 1994 enumerates the categories of points available. The table below summarises maximum points by category for visa subclasses 189, 190, and 491 in 2026.

- **Age (max 30 points):** 25 to 32 years scores 30 points. 18 to 24 and 33 to 39 score 25 points. 40 to 44 score 15 points. 45 and above score 0; the visa is not available.
- **English (max 20 points):** Competent (eligibility, 0 points), Proficient (10 points), Superior (20 points).
- **Skilled employment outside Australia (max 15 points):** 8 years or more — 15 points. 5 to 7 years — 10 points. 3 to 4 years — 5 points. Under 3 years — 0 points.
- **Skilled employment in Australia (max 20 points):** 8 years or more — 20 points. 5 to 7 years — 15 points. 3 to 4 years — 10 points. 1 to 2 years — 5 points.
- **Educational qualification (max 20 points):** Doctorate — 20 points. Bachelor or higher — 15 points. Diploma or trade qualification — 10 points.
- **Australian study requirement (5 points):** A qualification of at least two academic years from an Australian institution.

- **Specialist educational qualification in STEM (10 points):** Master's by research or doctorate in a STEM discipline from an Australian institution.
- **Professional Year in Australia (5 points):** Completed in accounting, computing, or engineering.
- **Credentialed community language (5 points):** NAATI accreditation as a translator or interpreter at the certified level.
- **Study in regional Australia (5 points):** Living and studying in regional Australia for the qualification claimed under Australian study.
- **Partner skills (max 10 points):** 10 points for a partner with skills assessment, English Competent or above, and age under 45. 5 points for a partner with English Competent. 10 points if single (under regulation, with declaration).
- **State or territory nomination (5 or 15 points):** 5 points for 190 nomination. 15 points for 491 nomination.

A maximum theoretical score is 130 points. Real-world claims rarely exceed 110 points without state nomination, and rarely exceed 125 points with nomination.

THE QUESTION: "Should I claim partner skills points?"

What They Assess

The case officer evaluates whether your partner meets all the criteria for the claimed level: skills assessment in an eligible occupation, English at the appropriate level, and age below 45. Partial matches do not qualify; the partner must meet all three criteria for 10 points or English Competent only for 5 points.

How to Answer

- Get your partner a positive skills assessment in an occupation on the same skilled occupation list as yours, before you claim 10 partner-skills points.

- Get your partner an English test result valid at the time of EOI lodgement.
- Verify your partner's age at intended visa lodgement, not at EOI lodgement; passing 45 between EOI and invitation negates the claim.
- If the partner does not meet the 10-point criteria, consider claiming 5 partner-English points alone (Competent English only) — this requires only an English test, not a skills assessment.
- If neither qualifies, consider claiming the 10 single-applicant points by declaration — but only if your relationship status genuinely supports that declaration.

Do Not Say

- Do not declare a single-applicant claim while in a de facto relationship; the declaration must be true.
- Do not claim partner skills points while the partner's skills assessment is "in progress"; the assessment must be positive at EOI lodgement.
- Do not assume "Competent" English for the partner without a test; declarations of English level cannot substitute for a test result.

DECLARATION RISK

Partner-skills and partner-English points carry an elevated declaration risk for a specific reason. They depend on representations about a third person's capabilities and English level, and on the genuineness of the relationship. Misrepresentations in this area engage both PIC 4020 (misleading information) and PIC 4001 (character) of the Migration Regulations 1994. If the relationship itself is not genuine, the relationship-based claim engages section 240 of the Migration Act 1958 (false or misleading information about non-citizens). Always evidence the partner claim with the same rigour as the primary applicant's claim.

The Honest Score Worksheet

Before lodgement, complete the following worksheet on a single page. For each line, write the claim, the points value, the evidence in hand at the time of writing, and the gap to be closed before lodgement.

- **Age.** Date of birth, points value at intended lodgement date.
- **English.** Test type, date sat, validity expiry, current best each-band score, points value.
- **Overseas employment.** Each role: dates, employer, ANZSCO code, points-claimable years (after assessing-authority deduction), evidence on file.
- **Australian employment.** Each role: dates, employer, ANZSCO code, hours per week, evidence on file.
- **Qualification.** Highest qualification, institution, year of conferral, recognition status with assessing authority.
- **Australian study, STEM, regional study.** Each Australian qualification: institution, level, location, dates.
- **Professional Year.** Provider, dates, certificate.
- **NAATI.** Accreditation level, language, certificate date.
- **Partner skills.** Skills assessment, English score, age — all three or none.
- **State nomination.** Target state, target subclass (190 or 491), eligibility checked, application timing planned.

When the worksheet is complete, sum the points values where evidence is in hand. Any gap between the in-hand total and the score you intend to claim is a flag. Either close the gap before lodgement or reduce the EOI claim to the in-hand total. Lodging an EOI with claims that exceed your in-hand evidence sets up a refusal at invitation.

PART III

LODGING YOUR EOI IN SKILLSELECT

Step by Step, Question by Question

PURPOSE & RISK

Part III walks through the SkillSelect EOI platform field by field. The risk this part addresses is the inconsistency refusal: the applicant whose EOI says one thing, whose Form 80 says a slightly different thing, whose skills assessment says a third, and whose visa application contradicts all three. Every field in SkillSelect must align with the underlying evidence and with every other form the applicant lodges. The book treats each major question with the standard four-part structure: What They Assess, How to Answer, Sample Answer with variations, and Do Not Say. Where a question carries elevated declaration risk under PIC 4020 or PIC 4001, that risk is flagged.

Chapter 10

Creating Your ImmiAccount and Accessing SkillSelect

All Department of Home Affairs interactions for skilled migration take place through ImmiAccount, the unified online portal at online.immi.gov.au. ImmiAccount is the gateway to SkillSelect (where you lodge an EOI), to visa application lodgement (where you lodge your substantive 189, 190, or 491 application), and to all subsequent communications with the Department. Setting up ImmiAccount correctly the first time saves significant time later in the process.

Single Applicant or Family ImmiAccount

A single ImmiAccount can hold multiple applications and be used for an entire family unit. The primary applicant should set up the ImmiAccount under his or her own name and email address, and add the partner and children as members of subsequent applications. Do not have the registered migration agent or consultant create the ImmiAccount in his or her own name; that creates ownership and access disputes if the relationship later changes.

Identity Details at Account Creation

Three identity details set at account creation are non-trivial to change later: the legal name, the date of birth, and the country of citizenship. Match the passport exactly. If your passport gives your name as "RAJESH KUMAR SINGH" without a comma, enter your given names as "Rajesh Kumar" and surname as "Singh"; do not enter "Singh, Rajesh Kumar." If you have only one name on your passport, follow Department guidance on entering "FNU" or repeating the single name in both fields, depending on the passport convention.

DECLARATION RISK

Identity discrepancies between the ImmiAccount, the EOI, the skills assessment, and any prior Australian visa applications are flagged automatically. Even small discrepancies — a missing middle name, a transliteration variation between two passport renewals — should be reconciled in writing in the EOI Notes section and again in Form 80. The Department's identity verification systems extend to other immigration databases including UK, Canada, and US records under information-sharing arrangements. Do not assume an inconsistency will go unnoticed.

Accessing SkillSelect Inside ImmiAccount

SkillSelect is reached from the ImmiAccount dashboard via the "New application" link, then "Skilled migration (Points based)." From there you choose between an "Express of Interest" or, after invitation, a substantive visa application. The EOI itself is a separate transaction from the visa application that follows it; the EOI is free, and the visa application carries the visa application charge.

A single ImmiAccount can hold multiple EOIs. Some applicants lodge separate EOIs for 189, 190, and 491 to cover multiple pathways simultaneously. This is permissible and common. The same set of underlying claims should appear consistently across all EOIs lodged from the same account.

Recommended ImmiAccount Hygiene

Treat the ImmiAccount like an investment portfolio. Three habits keep it healthy.

First, log in monthly. The Department of Home Affairs issues correspondence by email, but the email links into the ImmiAccount portal where the substantive document sits. Failing to log in within twenty-eight days of an invitation can cause the invitation to lapse without further notice.

Second, keep contact details current. A change of address, a change of phone number, or a change of email should be updated in ImmiAccount within seven days. The Department uses the registered email for all communications; an outdated email can mean missed invitations and procedural fairness letters.

Third, save your reference number off-platform. Each EOI receives a SkillSelect reference number, and each visa application receives a TRN. Save both in a secure file. Reference numbers are how you and your representatives raise queries with the Department and are not always easily recoverable from the ImmiAccount alone.

Chapter 11

The SkillSelect EOI Form, Question by Question

This chapter walks through the SkillSelect EOI form field by field, in the order in which the platform presents the fields, and applies the standard four-part micro-structure to each major question. Use this chapter as your workbench: draft your answers in your own copy of this book or in a separate document, run each draft through the four-part structure, then transcribe the final answer into SkillSelect.

Section 1 — Applicant Details

THE QUESTION: "Family name and given names"

What They Assess

Whether the name in the EOI exactly matches the passport name and the names used in every supporting document including the skills assessment, English test result, and any prior Australian visa applications.

How to Answer

- Copy the name exactly from the machine-readable zone of the passport.
- If your passport spells your name with a transliteration that differs from a prior visa, lodge a separate name discrepancy declaration in Form 80 explaining the variation.
- For Sikh applicants whose passport gives "Singh" or "Kaur" as a religious surname rather than a family name, follow current Department guidance on which field to use.

Do Not Say

- Do not Latinise or anglicise your name; use the exact passport spelling.

- Do not use a nickname or short form; legal name only.

THE QUESTION: "Date of birth and country of birth"

What They Assess

Whether the date of birth and country of birth match the passport, the birth certificate (where required), and any prior immigration applications. Country of birth determines visa fee waivers and biometric requirements in some cases.

How to Answer

- Date format DD/MM/YYYY exactly as on the passport.
- Country of birth is the country where you were physically born, not the country of your citizenship at birth.
- If you were born in a country that no longer exists under that name (USSR, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia), follow current Department guidance on which name to use.

Do Not Say

- Do not enter your country of citizenship if it differs from the country where you were physically born.
- Do not adjust the date of birth to match a corrected birth certificate without disclosing the prior version.

THE QUESTION: "Country of citizenship"

What They Assess

Whether the citizenship matches the passport(s) used, and whether you hold or have held any other citizenships including dual nationalities. Multiple citizenship can affect visa application fees, biometric collection, and character checks.

How to Answer

- Declare every citizenship you hold or have held.

- For dual citizens, identify the passport you intend to travel on for visa purposes; the choice can have practical effects on biometrics and verification.
- Where a citizenship was renounced, document the renunciation date.

Do Not Say

- Do not omit a former citizenship even if it was renounced.
- Do not omit citizenship of a country you have not visited in many years; the Department checks against international databases.

DECLARATION RISK

Identity questions — name, date of birth, country of birth, citizenship — anchor the entire visa file. Inconsistencies in identity claims are the single most heavily flagged area in skilled migration verification. Past undisclosed citizenship or undisclosed alternative spellings of the name engage Public Interest Criterion 4020 and section 234 of the Migration Act 1958 (giving false or misleading information). Always disclose every prior name, prior citizenship, and prior immigration history fully.

Section 2 — Visa Subclass and Nominated Occupation

THE QUESTION: "Which visa subclass(es) are you submitting this EOI for?"

What They Assess

Whether the visa subclasses you select are realistic for your points, your occupation, and your readiness to commit to a state or region. Multiple selections are permitted.

How to Answer

- Select 189 only if your honest score is at or above the recent invitation cut-off for your occupation in the 189 invitation rounds.

- Select 190 if you are willing to commit (in good faith) to live and work in the nominating state for the period specified by the state, typically two years.
- Select 491 if your occupation appears on a regional list and you are willing to live in regional Australia for the duration of the provisional visa.
- Selecting multiple subclasses gives you the most opportunities for invitation; select all that apply if your profile genuinely supports them.

Do Not Say

- Do not select 491 if you have no genuine intent to live regionally; the moral commitment matters and the 191 PR pathway requires demonstrated regional residence.
- Do not select a subclass for which you do not meet the eligibility criteria; the EOI will be rejected at filtering.

THE QUESTION: "Nominated occupation (ANZSCO code)"

What They Assess

Whether your nominated ANZSCO code matches the code on your positive skills assessment, whether the code is on the relevant skilled occupation list, and whether the duties evidenced in your work history align with the ANZSCO task list.

How to Answer

- Use the exact code from your positive skills assessment outcome letter.
- Verify the code is on the current Core Skills Occupation List for 189 purposes, and on the relevant state occupation list for 190 / 491 purposes.
- If you hold positive assessments at two different codes (rare but possible), select the code with the more favourable invitation pattern in your target subclass.

Do Not Say

- Do not select a code for which you do not hold a positive skills assessment.
- Do not select a code that has been removed from the Core Skills Occupation List in the relevant program year.

SAMPLE ANSWER — Selecting visa subclass and ANZSCO code (mid-career engineer)

I am submitting this Expression of Interest for visa subclasses 190 and 491 in nominated occupation 233211, Civil Engineer. Engineers Australia issued a positive Migration Skills Assessment at code 233211 on 14 October 2025 under the Washington Accord pathway, valid for three years. The occupation appears on the Core Skills Occupation List, on the New South Wales 190 list, and on the regional New South Wales 491 list as of January 2026. My honest points score is 80 points without nomination, 85 with 190 nomination, or 95 with 491 nomination. I am not selecting 189 because the recent 189 cut-off in my occupation is at or above 95 points and I am not competitive at 80 without a nomination boost.

Section 3 — Skills Assessment Details

THE QUESTION: "Has your skills assessment been completed? If yes, by whom and on what date?"

What They Assess

Whether you hold a positive skills assessment current at the date of effect of the EOI, issued by the relevant assessing authority for the nominated ANZSCO code. The assessment must remain valid (typically three years from issue) at both invitation and visa lodgement.

How to Answer

- Enter the assessing authority exactly as named in the outcome letter (e.g., "Australian Computer Society" not "ACS").
- Enter the date of issue of the outcome letter, not the date of application.

- Enter the assessment reference number exactly as printed on the outcome letter.
- If your assessment includes a deduction (e.g., ACS deducts a number of years from the start of skilled employment), note this carefully — the deduction reduces your points-claimable employment.

Do Not Say

- Do not claim "in progress" or "expected" skills assessments; the assessment must be in hand.
- Do not enter an expired assessment as if current.

Section 4 — Employment History

THE QUESTION: "List all your employment over the last ten years (or since you finished study, whichever is longer)"

What They Assess

Complete chronological coverage with no gaps; consistency between EOI employment dates, skills assessment dates, Form 80 dates, and reference letter dates; whether claimed employment is at the nominated ANZSCO skill level; and whether claimed points-claimable years are evidenced through the documentary chain (tax records, payslips, contracts, references).

How to Answer

- List every job in chronological order with no gaps. Where you have a gap (study, parental leave, illness, unemployment), explain it in the position description field.
- Use exact start and end dates (DD/MM/YYYY) matching the contract or appointment letter.
- For each job, indicate whether you claim points for that employment ("Yes" or "No") and whether the work was performed in Australia or overseas.

- Mark only roles at the nominated ANZSCO skill level as "Yes." Roles at lower skill level, or before the skills-assessing authority's deduction date, must be listed but marked "No."
- Use the same job titles in the EOI, Form 80, and reference letters. Do not paraphrase.

Do Not Say

- Do not omit any employment, even if not points-claimable.
- Do not round dates; precise day-month-year evidences accuracy.
- Do not claim full-time hours where you worked part-time; pro-rata applies.

VARIATIONS BY PROFILE

ICT professional with ACS deduction: *My total professional employment as a Software Engineer began on 01 July 2014. The ACS skills assessment dated 12 November 2025 recognises my skilled employment from 01 July 2018 onward (with a four-year deduction for non-ICT major bachelor degree). In the EOII list employment from July 2014 in chronological order, but only mark periods after 01 July 2018 as "Yes" for points-claimable employment.*

Engineer with Washington Accord: *My professional employment as a Civil Engineer began on 15 March 2020. Engineers Australia issued a positive skills assessment via the Washington Accord pathway on 14 October 2025; this pathway does not apply a deduction. I list all my engineering employment from March 2020 in the EOI and mark each period as "Yes" for points-claimable employment.*

Cook via TRA Job Ready Program: *My employment as a Cook began on 02 February 2018 in India and continued in Australia from 22 August 2022 on a 482 visa. TRA issued a positive Job Ready Program outcome on 03 February 2026. The TRA pathway recognises pre-Australian experience for assessment but only Australian employment after the Job Ready Program completion counts as points-claimable. I list all cook employment in the EOI but mark only post-03 February 2026 Australian employment as points-claimable.*

DECLARATION RISK

Employment claims are the most heavily verified category in skilled migration. The Department of Home Affairs verifies through tax records, statutory contributions, on-site visits in higher-risk source countries, calls to employer HR, and cross-checks against PIN/PF/SSC databases. Inflated duties, fabricated employers, and undisclosed gaps engage Public Interest Criterion 4020 — three-year exclusion. Always disclose every employment in full, mark only genuinely skilled employment as points-claimable, and build the documentary chain before lodgement.

Section 5 — English Language

THE QUESTION: "What is your highest English proficiency level achieved?"

What They Assess

Whether your claimed level (Competent, Proficient, or Superior) is supported by a current valid test result from an approved provider, and whether the lowest band score reaches the threshold for the claimed level.

How to Answer

- Enter the test type exactly (IELTS Academic, PTE Academic, TOEFL iBT, OET).
- Enter the test date (the actual test sitting date, not the result issue date).
- Enter your scores in each section in the format the platform requires (IELTS gives separate L/R/W/S; PTE gives separate L/R/W/S; etc.).
- Select the level (Competent, Proficient, Superior) that the lowest of your band scores supports.
- Verify the test result is within validity (three years from test date for skilled migration).

Do Not Say

- Do not select a level higher than your lowest band supports.

- Do not use a test result that has expired or will expire before the 60-day visa lodgement window after invitation.
- Do not stack test results from different sittings for different bands; each score level must come from a single test sitting.

Section 6 — Educational Qualifications

THE QUESTION: "List your educational qualifications"

What They Assess

Whether each qualification is at the level claimed, whether the conferring institution is recognised, and whether the qualification has been accepted by the assessing authority for the nominated ANZSCO code.

How to Answer

- List qualifications in chronological order from the most recent.
- For each, state the qualification name as conferred (e.g., "Bachelor of Engineering (Civil)"), the institution, the country, the year of conferral, and the duration in years.
- Mark Australian qualifications separately if they support an Australian Study point claim.
- Where a qualification is recognised by the assessing authority at a different level than nominally awarded, follow the assessing authority's recognition.
- Have transcripts and degree certificates apostilled or notarised in advance, ready for visa lodgement.

Do Not Say

- Do not list courses that did not result in a conferred qualification.
- Do not list qualifications from unaccredited providers as if equivalent to those from accredited institutions.

Section 7 — Partner Details

THE QUESTION: "Are you married or in a de facto relationship?"

What They Assess

Whether your relationship status is genuine, current, and supportable by evidence at invitation. Whether your partner is included in the visa application, and if so, whether you are claiming partner skills points or partner English points.

How to Answer

- Declare your true relationship status. "Married" requires a registered marriage. "De facto" requires a relationship of at least twelve months' duration (with limited exceptions for registered relationships in certain Australian states), with shared finances, social recognition, and household.
- Where a de facto relationship is declared, gather the four pillars of evidence: financial (joint accounts, bills), household (shared lease or property), social (joint travel, photographs, statements from family and friends), and commitment (statements from each partner explaining the relationship history).
- For previous marriages or relationships, declare them and provide divorce decrees or separation evidence. Hidden prior marriages are commonly detected through international information-sharing.

Do Not Say

- Do not declare a non-genuine relationship to claim partner points or include a partner.
- Do not omit a prior marriage or de facto relationship.
- Do not declare "single" if a current relationship of any duration exists; the determination depends on substance not status.

DECLARATION RISK

Relationship-based claims and partner skills points carry compounding declaration risks. Misrepresentation of relationship status engages PIC 4020 (misleading information). Non-genuine relationships engage section 240 of the Migration Act 1958 (false or misleading information about non-citizens) and may engage criminal sanctions. Partner skills point claims based on the partner's skills assessment, English score, and age must be supported by a current positive skills assessment and current valid English test result; provisional or expected results cannot be claimed. Always evidence the partner claim with the same rigour as the primary applicant's claim.

THE QUESTION: "Do you wish to claim partner skills points?"

What They Assess

Whether your partner has a positive skills assessment in an eligible occupation (10 points), or English at Competent level (5 points), or whether a single-applicant declaration is being made (10 points). The partner's qualifying details must be supported by documentary evidence at invitation.

How to Answer

- For the 10-point partner-skills claim: ensure your partner has a positive skills assessment from the relevant assessing authority for an occupation on the same skilled occupation list as yours, has English at Competent level (test result valid), and is under age 45 at the date of intended visa lodgement.
- For the 5-point partner-English claim: ensure your partner has an English test result at Competent level or above, valid at EOI lodgement.
- For the 10-point single-applicant claim: declare single status only if you genuinely have no current married or de facto partner.

Do Not Say

- Do not declare partner-skills points without a positive skills assessment in the partner's name.
- Do not declare partner English without a current English test result.
- Do not declare single status while in a current relationship.

Section 8 — Other Claims

SkillSelect collects further claims: Australian Study, Specialist Education in STEM, Professional Year, Credentialed Community Language, study in regional Australia, and state or territory nomination. Each follows the same four-part discipline.

THE QUESTION: "Have you completed an Australian Study Requirement qualification?"

What They Assess

Whether the qualification was at the prescribed level and duration (a minimum of two academic years, or 92 weeks, of study at a CRICOS-registered Australian provider, in English, with a degree or diploma awarded).

How to Answer

- Enter the institution name and CRICOS provider code.
- Enter the qualification name, level, start date, and end date.
- Verify that the cumulative duration meets the two-academic-year requirement.
- Where the qualification was on a 485 or 500 visa, retain the visa grant notices for evidence.

Do Not Say

- Do not claim Australian Study for a qualification of less than two academic years' duration.
- Do not claim it for a qualification at a non-CRICOS provider.

THE QUESTION: "State or territory nomination — do you wish to be considered?"

What They Assess

Whether you are willing to be considered for nomination by one or more states or territories, and which jurisdictions you wish to be considered by. Selecting a state in SkillSelect does not in itself apply for nomination — most states require a separate application via their own portal.

How to Answer

- Select all states you are realistically willing to commit to. Selecting a state for which you have no genuine intent generates no benefit and creates a risk of nomination by a state you would not actually move to.
- Note that 491 selections require selection of a regional designated area as well.
- Cross-check the states you select with the eligibility criteria of each. A state will only nominate where its own criteria are met; selection in SkillSelect is the first step, not the only step.

Do Not Say

- Do not select states you have no intent of relocating to.
- Do not select states for which you do not meet the eligibility criteria; the nomination application will fail.

Chapter 12

The Date of Effect and Why It Decides Your Place in the Queue

The Date of Effect is the most misunderstood field in SkillSelect. Applicants treat it as a queue position. Practitioners know it as a tiebreaker. The difference matters when you are deciding whether to update an EOI, when to update it, and what to update.

Definition of Date of Effect

Your Date of Effect is the date and time at which your current points score was first achieved in your EOI. It is shown on the SkillSelect dashboard as a date/time in Australian Eastern Standard Time. The Date of Effect changes whenever your points score changes — upward or downward — and otherwise remains the date/time at which the score was achieved.

Three concrete examples make the rule clear.

18. **Example 1:** You lodge a new EOI on 10 February 2026 at 09:30 AEST claiming 80 points. Date of Effect: 10 February 2026 09:30. You are competing in the 80-point cohort with that timestamp as tiebreaker.
19. **Example 2:** On 25 February 2026, you receive a Superior English result and update your EOI from 80 to 90 points. Your new Date of Effect is 25 February 2026, the time the update was saved. You are now competing in the 90-point cohort with the new timestamp; the old 80-point timestamp is irrelevant.
20. **Example 3:** On 15 March 2026, you turn 33, dropping from the 25 to 32 age band (30 points) to the 33 to 39 age band (25 points). Your total drops from 90 to 85. Your Date of Effect resets to the date of the change, 15 March 2026. You are now in the 85-point cohort.

When the Date of Effect Matters and When It Does Not

Date of Effect only matters within a tied points score. The selection rule is: highest points first, earliest Date of Effect as tiebreaker. If two applicants are at 90 points and one has Date of Effect 10 February 2026 and the other 25 February 2026, the earlier-dated applicant is invited first within the same round (assuming they are both eligible for the same allocation pool).

Date of Effect does not matter:

- When applicants are at different points scores; the higher score always wins regardless of date.
- When the applicants are competing in different invitation pools (different occupations, different visa subclasses, different state nomination programs).
- When the round's allocation for an occupation is large enough that all applicants at a given points score are invited.

The Update Decision Tree

Three rules guide the update decision.

First, an update that adds points is unambiguously good even though it resets the Date of Effect. The trade-off — old earlier date versus new higher score — always favours the new higher score, because higher points beats earlier date.

Second, an update that holds points neutral with no new claim should be avoided. Editing an EOI to fix a typo or update an address can technically reset the Date of Effect even though the score is unchanged; check the platform behaviour before lodging non-substantive edits.

Third, an update that lowers points (typically because of a birthday) is involuntary and should be planned for. Where you can secure a state nomination, additional partner-skills points, or a higher English score before turning the next age band, do so before the birthday.

Chapter 13

Updating Your EOI without Losing Position

Updating an EOI is routine and necessary. New employment periods complete. New English test results arrive. State nominations are received. The skill is in updating without introducing inconsistency, and in timing updates so that score gains outweigh any Date of Effect cost.

Updates That Should Always Be Made

Some updates are mandatory and must be made within twenty-eight days of the change.

- **Change of name.** Marriage, divorce, or legal name change requires update with supporting evidence.
- **Change of relationship status.** A new marriage or de facto relationship, or the end of one, must be reflected.
- **New family member.** Birth of a child or addition of a dependant must be added.
- **Change of citizenship.** Acquiring a new citizenship or renouncing one.
- **Change in points score.** Any change to a claim that affects points must be reflected promptly.

Updates That Should Be Strategic

Other updates are voluntary and should be timed for maximum benefit.

- **New English test result.** Update as soon as the result is in hand and validity confirmed; the additional points outweigh the Date of Effect reset.

- **Additional employment period.** When you cross a points-test employment boundary (3 years, 5 years, 8 years), update on or after the boundary date.
- **Partner skills assessment.** When the partner's skills assessment is issued.
- **NAATI accreditation.** When credentialled community language certification is issued.

Updates That Are Risky

Some updates carry hidden risk and require careful consideration.

- **Adding a new ANZSCO code or visa subclass.** Lodging a fresh EOI under a different code resets that EOI's Date of Effect to lodgement; the old EOI continues separately. Two EOIs under different codes is permissible but the underlying claims must be consistent.
- **Editing past employment dates.** Once entered, employment date corrections must be supportable. Be ready to explain any prior version of the date.
- **Changing the answer to character or health questions.** Any change to the answer to a character question requires explanation; new disclosures must be backed by documents.

What Resets the Date of Effect

Department of Home Affairs guidance on what resets the Date of Effect has evolved over time. As a working rule, treat any change to a points-test answer as a reset trigger, and any change to a non-points field (address, email, phone) as a non-reset action. When in doubt, screenshot the dashboard before and after the edit to verify whether the Date of Effect changed.

Withdrawing and Re-Lodging

Some applicants ask whether they should withdraw a stale EOI and re-lodge. Three considerations apply.

First, a stale EOI does not "decay" beyond the Date of Effect drift. If your score and underlying claims are otherwise identical, there is no benefit to re-lodging.

Second, if the underlying claims have shifted (different ANZSCO code, different visa subclass, different state target), a fresh EOI may be cleaner than editing the existing one — particularly if the original carried errors you would otherwise need to disclose.

Third, withdrawing leaves a record. EOIs are not erased on withdrawal; the Department retains the lodgement history, and any inconsistency between the withdrawn EOI and a subsequent EOI must be explainable.

PART IV

STATE NOMINATION

The Eight Jurisdictions Decoded

PURPOSE & RISK

Part IV decodes the eight Australian state and territory nomination programs as they operate in 2026. The risk this part addresses is mismatch: the applicant who applies to the wrong state, on the wrong stream, with the wrong evidence, on the wrong date. Each jurisdiction operates an entirely separate program with its own occupation list, eligibility thresholds, points or matrix scores, evidence standards, and selection mechanism. A profile that is competitive in Tasmania might be entirely uncompetitive in Victoria. Each chapter below treats the jurisdiction with the same standard structure: program design and selection method, eligibility thresholds, evidence required, the genuine commitment question, and the model answer pattern for the state's own statement-of-commitment field.

Chapter 14

How State Nomination Adds Points to Your EOI

A state or territory nomination adds five points to your EOI for the 190 visa, or fifteen points for the 491 visa. The nomination is granted by the state or territory government on the basis of an application lodged through the state's own portal — separate from, and additional to, your federal SkillSelect EOI. State nomination is the highest-leverage variable in your strategy after English, because it can move a borderline points score into clear competitive territory.

How the State Nomination Process Works

The process across all eight jurisdictions broadly follows four stages.

21. **Stage 1 — Eligibility check.** Confirm that the state's nomination program is open, that your nominated ANZSCO code is on the state's current list, that you meet the state's minimum points or matrix score, that you meet any state-specific work or English thresholds, and that you meet local-residency or "ready now" criteria where the state imposes them.
22. **Stage 2 — EOI selection in SkillSelect.** Indicate the state in your SkillSelect EOI under "State or territory nomination — wish to be considered." For some jurisdictions this is the trigger for the state to issue an invitation to apply; for others, an EOI selection is preliminary only.
23. **Stage 3 — State portal application.** Apply through the state's own migration portal, paying the state's nomination fee and uploading the evidence pack required by the state. This is a separate transaction from the SkillSelect EOI.
24. **Stage 4 — Nomination grant and SkillSelect invitation.** The state assesses the application and either approves or declines. On approval, the state lodges the nomination in SkillSelect, which

typically results in an invitation to apply for the substantive 190 or 491 visa within days.

What States Look For

Each state weights its assessment differently, but the core criteria across jurisdictions are consistent.

- **Workforce fit.** Is your occupation on the state's priority list? Does the state need workers in your sector now?
- **English level.** Most states require Proficient (IELTS 7.0) for nomination, with some requiring Superior for shortage occupations and some accepting Competent for trades.
- **Skilled employment, particularly local.** Employment in the state in the nominated occupation is the strongest single signal.
- **Genuine commitment to live and work in the state.** Family ties, prior study, prior employment, current local address, settlement plan with named cities.
- **Settlement funds.** Most states require evidence of a minimum of AUD 50,000 to AUD 70,000 in settlement funds for primary applicant plus dependants.
- **"Ready now" capacity.** Several states give priority or restrict eligibility to applicants who are immediately available — currently in Australia on a temporary visa, or in active job-search with a credible plan.

THE QUESTION: "Why are you applying to this state, and what is your genuine commitment to live and work here?"

What They Assess

The state assesses whether your stated commitment is genuine, supported by concrete evidence beyond words alone, and consistent across the application package. Generic commitment statements are heavily penalised.

How to Answer

- Lead with concrete connections: family living in the state (with addresses), prior study at a state institution (with dates), prior employment in the state (with employer name), current Australian address in the state.
- Demonstrate occupation-specific demand: identify two or three named employers in the state who are hiring in your ANZSCO code, with reference to current job postings or industry contacts.
- Name the specific city or region you intend to settle in, with reasoning rooted in the state's economic geography (e.g., "Newcastle for civil engineering on the Hunter coal-to-renewables transition" not "anywhere in NSW").
- Include a settlement plan covering the first ninety days: temporary accommodation arrangement, schools or childcare, banking, GP registration, transport, networks for job-search.

Do Not Say

- Do not state "I will live and work in [State]" without supporting evidence; this is the single most common reason for declined nominations.
- Do not copy commitment language from a sample document; states notice.
- Do not claim ties or contacts that cannot be verified; verifications are routine.

SAMPLE ANSWER — Genuine commitment statement (Victoria, software engineer offshore)

I am applying for Victorian state nomination because Victoria is the centre of Australia's financial services technology sector and matches the work I have done for the past five years at a tier-one Indian bank. Three concrete factors anchor my commitment.

First, my brother is a permanent resident of Australia residing at 14 Rathmines Road, Hawthorn East, Melbourne. He has worked as a Senior Project Manager at NAB since 2018. We have stayed in close contact

through the migration process, and he has confirmed he will host my family for the initial six weeks of settlement.

Second, my professional research identifies five Melbourne-based employers who are actively recruiting in ANZSCO 261313 Software Engineer roles aligned to my background: NAB, ANZ, IRESS, Pexa, and REA Group. I have applied to four of these companies in the four weeks before this nomination application and have first-round interviews scheduled with two.

Third, my settlement plan is concrete. I will arrive on a 190 visa within four weeks of grant, take up temporary accommodation with my brother in Hawthorn East, register with the local Tax Office and Medicare within seven days, enrol my daughter in primary school in the Hawthorn East catchment, and convert one of my pending interviews into a permanent role within ninety days. I have settlement funds of AUD 65,000 in a Wise multi-currency account specifically reserved for the relocation.

VARIATIONS BY PROFILE

Onshore applicant in NSW switching to VIC nomination: *I am currently on a 482 visa working in Sydney as an Analyst Programmer, but my long-term family settlement plan is Melbourne. My wife's parents are permanent residents living in Glen Waverley. We have visited every six weeks for the past two years and our daughter has been enrolled in the local kindergarten there during those visits. I am ending my Sydney role on 28 February 2026 and have a written job offer from PEXA in Melbourne starting 17 March 2026. My commitment to Victoria is supported by the family ties, the documented job offer, and the timeline.*

Tasmania graduate seeking Tasmanian nomination: *I completed a Master of Engineering at the University of Tasmania, Hobart campus, between February 2023 and December 2024. Throughout my studies I lived in Hobart at 22 Wellington Street, worked part-time at a local civil engineering consultancy, and built a professional network in the Hobart and Launceston engineering community. After graduation I returned briefly to my home country to be with my elderly mother. I am applying for Tasmanian nomination to return to Hobart, where I have been offered a position with the same consultancy on a permanent basis.*

Regional South Australia 491 candidate, healthcare: *I am applying for South Australian regional nomination as a Registered Nurse. I have been corresponding for six months with the Director of Nursing at a Whyalla*

regional health service. The service has confirmed in writing that they will offer me a permanent position on grant of a 491 visa. My settlement plan is concrete: I will relocate to Whyalla within six weeks of grant, take up the position immediately, and have already arranged tentative housing through the local hospital's relocation support program.

DECLARATION RISK

Statements of commitment in state nomination applications carry elevated declaration risk for two reasons. First, the state will verify the concrete claims you make — the brother's address, the named employers, the job offer, the settlement funds. Inflated or fabricated claims are commonly detected at this stage. Second, the federal Department of Home Affairs receives the state nomination as part of the visa file and treats inconsistency between state and federal claims as a misrepresentation flag under PIC 4020. Always keep the state nomination application and the federal EOI / visa application aligned, and never state intent to live in a state you have no intent of moving to.

COMPARATIVE NOTE — SUB-NATIONAL SELECTION

Australia: Eight states and territories run their own nomination programs. The Migration Act 1958 and Migration Regulations 1994 establish the federal framework; states design and administer their nomination programs within that framework. Selection by a state confers five (190) or fifteen (491) points in SkillSelect.

Canada (IRCC): Canada's Provincial Nominee Programs (PNPs) operate similarly, with each province running its own streams. PNP nomination adds 600 CRS points in Express Entry, effectively guaranteeing an invitation. Provinces use a mix of EOI ranking, employer-driven streams, and graduate streams. Express Entry-aligned PNPs interface with the federal pool; non-aligned PNPs run a parallel paper-based process.

United States (USCIS): The United States does not operate sub-national skilled migration programs. EB-5 regional centres provide investor-visa pathways tied to specific geographic areas, but employment-based EB-2 and EB-3 pathways are uniformly federal.

Chapter 15

New South Wales

New South Wales operates the largest 190 program by allocation and the largest 491 program in the eastern seaboard. The state's priorities reflect Sydney's position as Australia's financial centre and the Hunter's transition from coal to renewables. NSW nomination is highly competitive and largely points-driven, but with sharp local-employment preferences for both 190 and 491 streams.

Program Design

NSW operates two principal streams.

- **Stream 1 — Subclass 190 Skilled Nominated.** Available across NSW, with a strong preference for applicants currently living and working in NSW or with concrete employment offers.
- **Stream 2 — Subclass 491 Regional.** Available for designated regional NSW areas, including the Hunter, Illawarra, Central Coast, Newcastle, and inland regional centres.

NSW selects via SkillSelect EOI ranking, factoring points score, English level, employment in NSW, and occupation priority. Some pathways operate on an "invited to apply" model, where the state issues invitations from the SkillSelect pool; some pathways operate on a "register your interest" model through a separate state portal.

Eligibility Thresholds

- **Federal points minimum (including 5 or 15 points for nomination).** Practical 190 nomination invitations in 2026 cluster at 90+ points including state nomination boost.
- **English.** Proficient (IELTS 7.0) is the working minimum for most occupations; Superior (8.0) preferred for popular ICT and professional occupations.

- **Skilled employment in NSW.** For 190, six to twelve months of recent skilled employment in NSW in the nominated occupation is a strong signal.
- **Settlement funds.** AUD 50,000 minimum for primary applicant plus dependants, evidenced by a recent bank statement.
- **Genuine intent.** NSW applies a strict commitment-to-NSW assessment for offshore 190 applicants.

Evidence Pack

NSW typically requires the following evidence pack at nomination application:

- Identity documents (passport bio page, all visa stamps).
- Skills assessment outcome letter and supporting evidence.
- English test result (IELTS, PTE, OET, or TOEFL).
- Employment evidence — contracts, payslips, tax records, employer reference letters for all claimed employment.
- Recent payslips and bank statements (within last sixty days) if currently employed in NSW.
- Settlement funds bank statements (within last thirty days).
- NSW-specific commitment evidence — current address, family ties, job offer, settlement plan.
- Curriculum vitae in NSW format if requested.

THE QUESTION: "Why have you chosen NSW, and how will you contribute to the NSW economy?"

What They Assess

Whether your reasons for choosing NSW are concrete and evidenced, and whether your contribution to the state economy is articulated in terms of specific sectors, employers, or projects rather than general statements.

How to Answer

- Identify the specific NSW economic story your skills match: Sydney financial services, Hunter renewables transition, Western Sydney health and education growth, Illawarra advanced manufacturing.
- Name two or three named employers or projects you have researched and intend to engage with.
- Articulate your contribution in terms the state would value: tax base, sector skills shortage, diversity of expertise.
- Tie the answer to your settlement plan and your timeline.

Do Not Say

- Do not state "Sydney has many job opportunities" or "NSW has good infrastructure" — these are generic.
- Do not refer to lifestyle or weather in a state nomination application; states value workforce contribution, not tourism.

SAMPLE ANSWER — NSW commitment (offshore civil engineer, Hunter target)

I have chosen New South Wales because the Hunter region is undergoing a structural transition from coal-fired generation to large-scale renewable energy infrastructure, which exactly matches my five years of civil engineering experience on substation and transmission projects in India. Three NSW employers are central to this transition — AGL, Origin Energy, and Squadron Energy — and all three are recruiting actively in my ANZSCO code 233211. I have applied to two open positions at AGL and one at Origin Energy in the past three weeks and have a screening interview scheduled with AGL on 24 February 2026.

My contribution to the NSW economy will be direct: I will join a renewables project team within ninety days of arrival, on a salary above the NSW state median, paying NSW payroll-tax-relevant contributions through my employer. My settlement plan is to base my family in Newcastle, where housing is affordable and the renewables corridor is most active. My settlement funds of AUD 60,000 are held in a Wise multi-currency account dedicated to the relocation.

Chapter 16

Victoria

Victoria has historically been the most innovation-focused of the state nomination programs. Victoria selects on workforce fit and sector alignment, with substantially less weight on points score than New South Wales. The Victorian Skilled and Business Migration Program emphasises three priority sectors in 2026: digital and ICT, health, and advanced manufacturing.

Program Design

Victoria operates a Registration of Interest (ROI) model. Candidates submit an ROI through the Victorian Government's migration portal, which is separate from SkillSelect. The Victorian Government reviews ROIs against current priority sectors and issues nomination invitations selectively rather than via points-only ranking.

Two streams operate: 190 for skilled nominated migrants intending to settle in Victoria broadly, and 491 for those intending to settle in regional Victoria, defined as everywhere in Victoria except metropolitan Melbourne.

What Victoria Selects On

Victoria publishes selection criteria that change with each program year. For 2026, the published criteria emphasise:

- Occupation alignment with priority sectors (digital, health, advanced manufacturing, with sub-priorities within each).
- Recent and ongoing skilled employment in Victoria, particularly for 190 nominations.
- Concrete, named employer relationships.
- Strong English (Proficient minimum, Superior preferred).

- Genuine intent to remain in Victoria for a substantial period after grant.

THE QUESTION: "How does your occupation align with Victoria's priority sectors, and what evidence do you have of fit?"

What They Assess

Whether your occupation maps clearly to a current Victorian priority sector, and whether you have concrete evidence of fit — employer relationships, named projects, sector-specific qualifications, or industry recognition.

How to Answer

- Identify the specific priority sector your occupation falls under (Victoria publishes priority sector lists; map your ANZSCO code to the matching sector).
- Articulate sector-specific qualifications you hold — certifications, specialised training, project experience.
- Reference Victorian sector employers you have engaged with (named).
- Quantify your contribution: years of experience in the sector, project values, team sizes managed.

Do Not Say

- Do not list every priority sector hoping to fit somewhere; pick the one your evidence genuinely supports.
- Do not generalise; "ICT" is too broad — specify cybersecurity, cloud architecture, AI/ML, financial services tech, etc.

SAMPLE ANSWER — Victoria sector alignment (cybersecurity specialist)

My occupation, ICT Security Specialist (ANZSCO 262112), aligns directly with Victoria's digital priority sector and specifically with the cybersecurity sub-priority identified in the 2026 program guidelines. I have seven years of

cybersecurity experience including five years as a senior security architect at HDFC Bank in Mumbai, where I led the implementation of the bank's cloud security framework across AWS and Azure environments serving 6 million retail customers.

My fit with the Victorian sector is concrete. The Australian Cyber Security Centre and Victorian Government's Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner have both identified critical-infrastructure cybersecurity as a high-priority skills shortage in 2026. Three Victorian employers I have engaged with — NAB, IRESS, and the Victorian Department of Health — are actively recruiting in this sub-discipline. I hold the CISSP and AWS Certified Security Specialty certifications, both of which are mandatory pre-screen credentials for these roles.

Chapter 17

Queensland

Queensland's Migration Queensland program operates two principal streams in 2026 — a 190 stream tied to working-in-Queensland eligibility, and a 491 regional stream covering everywhere in Queensland except Brisbane. Queensland places strong weight on current Queensland employment for 190 and on regional area commitment for 491.

Program Design

Queensland operates a closed selection process — applicants generally cannot self-apply but must be invited based on the SkillSelect EOI selection plus published Queensland-specific eligibility. For 190, applicants must typically be currently employed in Queensland in the nominated occupation. For 491, applicants must demonstrate genuine commitment to a designated regional area.

Designated Regional Areas in Queensland

All of Queensland except Brisbane is regional for 491 purposes, which makes Queensland one of the most accommodating states for regional nomination. Major regional centres include the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, Cairns, Townsville, Toowoomba, Bundaberg, Mackay, and Rockhampton. Queensland's 491 program does not require applicants to commit to a specific city, but does require evidence of genuine intent to settle outside Brisbane.

THE QUESTION: "How do you demonstrate current connection or planned regional connection to Queensland?"

What They Assess

Whether the connection is concrete, current, and supportable. Current Queensland employment is the strongest signal for 190; specific regional

plan with named area, job offer, or established networks is required for 491.

How to Answer

- For 190 applicants: provide current Queensland payslips, employer letter, lease agreement, and Queensland-issued ID.
- For 491 applicants: name the regional area you intend to settle, articulate why that specific area, and provide any prior connection (study, family, employment).
- Where a regional 491 is supported by a job offer, provide the offer letter on company letterhead with start date and salary.
- Where the connection is family-based, provide the family member's residency status, address, and a statement from the family member supporting your settlement.

Do Not Say

- Do not state "anywhere in regional Queensland" — Queensland reads this as no commitment at all.
- Do not propose a regional area with no supporting connection or employment plan.

Chapter 18

Western Australia

Western Australia's State Nominated Migration Program operates with a strong sectoral focus on resources, healthcare, and skilled trades. WA has historically been the most accommodating state for trade-skilled occupations and remains so in 2026. The Western Australian Government publishes a Graduate Stream alongside the General Stream, with each stream having its own occupation list.

Program Streams

- **General Stream.** For applicants outside Western Australia or those who have not studied in WA. Selection is based on SkillSelect EOI ranking and meeting WA-specific eligibility.
- **Graduate Stream.** For applicants who have completed a qualification at a WA institution and are seeking nomination. The Graduate Stream typically has lower English thresholds and broader occupation eligibility.

Resources Sector Priority

Western Australia's economy depends on the resources sector — iron ore, lithium, gold, and increasingly battery minerals. The state actively prioritises occupations directly serving the resources sector: mining engineers, mechanical engineers, electricians, welders, heavy diesel mechanics, and project managers with resources experience. Applicants with FIFO (fly-in-fly-out) experience in resources operations, even if outside Australia, often score highly on the WA assessment.

THE QUESTION: "How does your skilled employment align with WA priority sectors?"

What They Assess

Whether your work experience maps to a published WA priority sector, and whether the alignment is supported by employment evidence at the relevant ANZSCO skill level.

How to Answer

- Identify the WA priority sector your occupation maps to (resources, health, trades, energy infrastructure).
- Quantify your experience in the sector: project values, mine sites worked, equipment classes operated.
- Reference WA employers or project operators you have engaged with.
- Where you hold sector-specific tickets or certifications, list them with currency dates.

Do Not Say

- Do not pad sector experience with adjacent roles that do not actually involve sector work.
- Do not claim resources experience based on tangential exposure (e.g., construction in mining towns is not resources experience unless the work was directly on mine sites).

Chapter 19

South Australia

South Australia operates a State Nomination Program through Migration South Australia. The state's designated regional area covers the entire state, which makes the SA 491 stream broadly available. SA places strong weight on prior connection to the state — through study, employment, or family — and on demonstrated long-term commitment.

Program Streams

South Australia operates four main streams.

- **Skilled Nominated 190 — General.** For applicants meeting South Australian general nomination criteria.
- **Skilled Work Regional 491 — General.** Statewide regional eligibility with broad occupation list coverage.
- **Graduate of South Australia.** For graduates of SA institutions, with reduced threshold requirements.
- **High-Performing or Critical Skills.** For exceptional applicants meeting tightly defined criteria, including high earners and rare skills.

Connection Pathway and Long-Term Commitment

South Australia uses a "Connection Pathway" assessment for many applicants. The Connection Pathway recognises seven categories of connection: prior study in SA, prior employment in SA, partner or close family currently resident in SA, prior residence in SA, and several others. Applicants with a recognised connection are scored more favourably than those without. Applicants with no connection face stricter eligibility thresholds, particularly for 190 nomination.

THE QUESTION: "What is your connection to South Australia, and how does it support your settlement plan?"

What They Assess

Whether your connection falls within South Australia's recognised connection categories, whether the connection is supported by documents, and whether your settlement plan reflects genuine long-term intent.

How to Answer

- Identify the SA connection category that applies to you and document it (SA institution graduate, prior SA employment with payslips, SA-resident family with their address and residency status).
- For 491 applicants intending to settle outside Adelaide, name the specific regional centre (Whyalla, Mount Gambier, Murray Bridge) and articulate why.
- Where your connection is family-based, provide the family member's ID, residency status, address, and a statement from them supporting your settlement.
- Settlement plan should cover ninety days post-arrival with concrete steps.

Do Not Say

- Do not invent a connection that does not exist; SA verifies through institutional records and family documentation.
- Do not rely on a single prior visit as a "connection"; visits are not connection in the SA framework.

Chapter 20

Tasmania

Tasmania's nomination program is administered through Migration Tasmania within the Tasmanian Department of State Growth. Tasmania has historically been the most accessible state nomination program for offshore applicants, but in 2026 the program has tightened substantially. Tasmania now strongly prioritises applicants with current or recent Tasmanian study, employment, or business operations in the state.

Program Streams

- **Tasmanian Graduate stream.** For applicants who have completed a CRICOS-registered qualification of at least one academic year in Tasmania. The most accessible Tasmanian stream.
- **Skilled Employment in Tasmania stream.** For applicants currently employed in Tasmania for at least six months in the nominated occupation.
- **Overseas Applicant stream.** Limited 491 nomination for applicants with no Tasmanian connection, only available where Tasmania has unmet workforce shortages and the applicant's profile is clearly aligned.

Tasmanian Settlement Reality

Tasmania has a population of approximately 575,000, two principal cities (Hobart and Launceston), and a labour market driven by aged care, tourism, agriculture, and a growing renewables sector. Applicants who have not visited Tasmania, do not have a settlement plan grounded in the state's actual economy, or whose occupation does not match Tasmanian shortages will struggle. Tasmania publicly states that nomination is contingent on genuine intent to remain long-term, and the state has been visible in publishing data on retention rates of nominated migrants.

THE QUESTION: "Why have you chosen Tasmania, and what evidence supports your long-term commitment?"

What They Assess

Whether your reasons for choosing Tasmania are grounded in the state's actual economy and lifestyle, whether you have visited or studied in the state, and whether your settlement plan is realistic given Tasmania's small labour market.

How to Answer

- Identify a specific Tasmanian opportunity matching your occupation (named employer, sector, or region).
- Reference any prior Tasmanian connection — study, prior employment, family, multiple prior visits with documented dates.
- Articulate why Tasmania over a larger state — and frame the answer in terms of the Tasmanian context (community size, sector alignment, family lifestyle), not generic features.
- Settlement plan must be Tasmania-specific — Hobart, Launceston, North-West, or East Coast — with named accommodation, employment plan, and integration steps.

Do Not Say

- Do not write a generic "love of nature" or "lifestyle" statement; Tasmania assesses this as superficial.
- Do not claim long-term commitment with no prior contact with the state.

Chapter 21

Australian Capital Territory

The Australian Capital Territory operates the Canberra Matrix as its nomination selection tool. The Canberra Matrix is a transparent points-based ranking system separate from the federal points test. Applicants score themselves against the Matrix on age, English, qualifications, ACT employment, ACT study, ACT residence, partner factors, and other variables. The ACT Government invites top-scored Matrix applicants to apply for nomination on a periodic basis.

Program Streams

- **Canberra 190 — Skilled Nominated.** For Matrix-ranked applicants meeting ACT criteria.
- **Canberra 491 — Skilled Work Regional.** The ACT is treated as a designated regional area for 491 purposes.

The Canberra Matrix

The Canberra Matrix awards points across categories that include age, English, qualifications, length of ACT residence, ACT employment in nominated occupation, ACT employment in any skilled occupation, ACT study, partner ACT employment, partner English, and assets in the ACT. Each program year, the ACT publishes the current Matrix and adjusts thresholds based on demand.

Two practical points are critical. First, current ACT residence and ACT employment are heavily weighted in the Matrix; offshore applicants face an uphill scoring challenge. Second, Matrix scores are self-reported but verified at nomination application — over-claiming Matrix scores is detected and results in rejection.

THE QUESTION: "How have you scored your Canberra Matrix, and what evidence supports each claim?"

What They Assess

Whether each Matrix claim is supported by documentary evidence at the standard the ACT applies — ACT residential lease for residence claims, ACT-issued payslips for employment claims, CRICOS registration for study claims.

How to Answer

- Score the Matrix line by line; document the evidence behind each claim before finalising.
- Be conservative on borderline categories; ACT verifies and rejects over-claimed scores.
- Where a claim is provisional (employment about to start, lease about to commence), wait until the claim is firm before applying.

Do Not Say

- Do not claim ACT residence based on visiting friends or short stays; "residence" requires a sustained address.
- Do not claim ACT employment if the employer is registered outside the ACT but the work was performed remotely from elsewhere.

Chapter 22

Northern Territory

The Northern Territory operates the most pathway-rich nomination program of the eight jurisdictions. The NT has historically been the most accommodating state for applicants with limited points or non-standard profiles, but the NT applies a strict commitment-to-Territory assessment that compensates for the broader points eligibility.

Program Streams

- **Skilled Nominated 190 — Onshore.** For applicants currently in NT working or studying.
- **Skilled Nominated 190 — Offshore.** For applicants with strong NT connections (family, prior employment, or specific shortage occupation).
- **Skilled Work Regional 491 — Onshore.** For applicants currently in the NT meeting regional criteria.
- **Skilled Work Regional 491 — Offshore.** For applicants intending to relocate to NT regions, particularly remote NT for shortage occupations.
- **NT-Resident Pathway via Designated Area Migration Agreements (DAMA).** A separate employer-sponsored pathway under DAMA arrangements; covered in detail in our DAMA Pathway Guide for Australia 2026.

NT Realities

The NT has Australia's smallest population (approximately 250,000), a small labour market, a high cost of living in Darwin and Alice Springs, and substantial cultural and remote-area considerations particularly for healthcare and education professionals. NT nomination requires authentic engagement with these realities; the state actively rejects applications that

read as "stepping stone" applications intended to be abandoned after PR grant.

THE QUESTION: "Why are you committed to the Northern Territory, and how will you contribute to a remote-area economy?"

What They Assess

Whether your commitment to NT is informed and grounded, whether you understand the realities of life in Darwin, Alice Springs, or remote NT, and whether your contribution would be sustained beyond visa grant.

How to Answer

- Demonstrate informed engagement: refer to specific NT economic features (Darwin port and gas projects, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs services, remote health workforce shortages).
- For healthcare, education, and remote-services occupations, articulate what working in remote NT actually involves (cultural training, clinical autonomy in remote sites, family adjustment).
- Reference specific NT employers, agencies, or projects.
- Settlement plan should reference Darwin, Alice Springs, or named remote area, with specific accommodation and family arrangements.

Do Not Say

- Do not write generic "outback" language; NT residents read this as condescension.
- Do not propose Darwin if your real plan is to move south within twelve months; the state retains records and watches retention.

PART V

INVITATION AND THE 60-DAY VISA WINDOW

From Invitation to Decision

PURPOSE & RISK

Part V covers the period from the moment an invitation arrives to the moment the visa decision is made. The risk this part addresses is the time-pressure refusal: the applicant who has prepared the EOI well, received the invitation, and then loses the visa because the sixty-day lodgement window catches them with incomplete evidence, expired police certificates, or unverified employment letters. The window between invitation and lodgement is short, and case officers do not extend it on request. Every claim made in the EOI must convert to documentary evidence inside that window. This part teaches the systematic execution that the window demands.

Chapter 23

Invitation Rounds: Reading the Patterns

Invitation rounds are the heartbeat of SkillSelect. Reading the patterns in published round results lets you forecast your own invitation timing within reasonable bounds and adjust your strategy when the patterns shift.

How Rounds Work

The Department of Home Affairs runs SkillSelect invitation rounds approximately monthly, with the cadence and allocations driven by program-year planning levels and Ministerial Direction No. 105 priority processing settings. State and territory governments run their own nomination rounds on their own schedules, separate from federal rounds.

Federal rounds publish two key data points after each round: the cut-off score for invited applicants by occupation (where invitations were issued in that occupation), and the Date of Effect for the marginal invited applicant at that score. Together, these tell you what score and what date were sufficient to be invited in that round in your occupation.

What the Patterns Show in 2026

Three patterns are visible in the 2026 program year invitation data through January 2026.

- 25. Subclass 189 rounds are small and concentrated.** Federal 189 invitation volumes are well below historic peaks, often 500 to 1,200 invitations per round. The bulk of invitations go to Ministerial Direction No. 105 priority occupations: registered nurses, midwives, secondary school teachers, early childhood teachers, and a handful of high-priority engineering and ICT specialisms. Non-priority occupations are not invited at all in many rounds.

26. Subclass 491 has the largest volume but state-driven cadence.

The 491 program issues most of the federal regional allocation through state nominations, which in turn means 491 invitations cluster around the state nomination cycles rather than federal round dates. An applicant under 491 is effectively waiting for the relevant state to invite, not for a federal round.

27. Cut-offs rise through the year. Cut-off scores in popular occupations tend to be lowest in July and August (program-year start, fresh allocations) and highest in May and June (allocations exhausted, only highest-pointed candidates invited). Plan lodgement timing accordingly.

THE QUESTION: "Should I keep waiting in the pool, or should I update my profile and start state nomination applications?"

What They Assess

Whether your current profile is realistically competitive in the next two to three federal rounds at your occupation's historical cut-off, or whether the gap is large enough that active intervention (English re-test, partner skills, state nomination application) is needed.

How to Answer

- Identify the historical cut-off score for your occupation in your visa subclass over the most recent six rounds. Treat scores six months old or older as stale.
- Compare your honest current points score against that cut-off. If you are five points or more below cut-off, do not wait passively; intervene.
- Identify the highest-leverage intervention available: English re-test (potentially +10 points), partner skills assessment (+10), state nomination (+5 or +15), or NAATI accreditation (+5).
- Set a 90-day target to close the points gap or to secure a state nomination. Do not let the EOI sit untouched for longer than 90 days without affirmative action.

Do Not Say

- Do not assume "the queue will catch up to me." It will not; the pool has no memory.
- Do not lodge new EOIs at additional ANZSCO codes unless your evidence genuinely supports them.
- Do not rely on rumours or forum predictions about when invitations will increase; track the published round data.

Reading State Nomination Cycles

Every state and territory runs its own nomination cycle, distinct from federal rounds. Most states publish indicative timelines but reserve discretion to issue or pause nominations as their internal allocation tracking dictates. Practical rules for tracking state cycles:

- Subscribe to the state migration program's newsletter or RSS feed where available; states publish program updates on their own websites.
- Track historical month-by-month nomination volumes for the prior program year as a guide to current-year cadence.
- Recognise that some states front-load (issue most nominations in the first half of the year) and some back-load (hold allocations to assess applicant volume).
- Where a state offers an EOI / Registration of Interest portal, refresh the EOI annually if asked; stale EOIs may be deprioritised.

When the Pattern Breaks

Sometimes the published patterns break. Cut-offs jump unexpectedly. A state pauses nominations mid-cycle. The Federal Government issues a mid-year program adjustment. When this happens, three rules apply.

First, do not panic-lodge. A hasty lodgement at a marginal score can result in a refusal that triggers exclusion. Take the time to assess what changed and whether your evidence supports a competitive lodgement.

Second, talk to your professional adviser before significantly changing strategy. RCICs licensed by CICC, Australian registered migration agents, and Australian legal practitioners all have access to professional networks and policy briefings that surface the underlying drivers.

Third, document everything. Save copies of round results, state announcements, and any communications. If your case later requires a procedural fairness response, the documentary record is your evidence.

Chapter 24

The First 24 Hours after Invitation

The invitation arrives by email, with the substantive invitation letter visible inside the ImmiAccount portal. From the moment the invitation issues, you have sixty days to lodge a complete visa application. Sixty days sounds long. It is not. The first twenty-four hours after invitation set the tone for the entire window, and applicants who fritter the first day on celebrations or social media tend to fritter the next forty-five.

The First-Day Checklist

In the first twenty-four hours after invitation, complete the following.

28. **Save the invitation letter.** Download the PDF from ImmiAccount, save it locally and to a cloud backup, and note the visa subclass invited under, the points score, the Date of Effect, and the lodgement deadline.
29. **Verify the invitation matches your EOI.** The invitation should be at the visa subclass and points score reflected in your current EOI. Discrepancies should be raised with your registered migration agent immediately.
30. **Calculate your sixty-day deadline.** Use the date of the invitation, not the date you opened the email. Sixty days from invitation, not from receipt of the message.
31. **Pull your evidence inventory.** Open your master document checklist (Appendix B of this book) and mark each document as "in hand," "in progress," or "to obtain." Document gaps must be closed in the next thirty days.
32. **Order biometric appointments.** Biometrics for primary and dependants must be completed at an Australian Visa Application Centre. Slots can fill rapidly; book within the first week.
33. **Order police clearance certificates.** For every country where you have lived for twelve months or more in the last ten years,

including the country of citizenship. Some countries take six to eight weeks; start within the first week.

34. **Schedule health examinations.** Health checks must be completed at panel doctors approved by Bupa Medical Visa Services. Slots can fill in major cities; book within the first ten days.
35. **Update your dependants.** Confirm relationship documents, include any new dependants since EOI lodgement (new-born, marriage), and ensure all dependants hold valid passports.

Document Gaps and How to Close Them

Most applicants discover at least one document gap in the first day.

Common gaps and remediation paths:

- **Original university transcripts.** If your assessing authority required only certified copies, the visa application may now require originals. Order from the issuing institution; allow four to six weeks for international delivery.
- **Statutory contributions records.** PF / EPF passbook entries, social security statements, or equivalent. Most are downloadable online; allow forty-eight hours.
- **Marriage certificate apostille.** Required for visa lodgement; not required for EOI. If not yet apostille, apostille services typically take ten to fifteen working days.
- **Birth certificates for children.** Original certificates with apostille; some countries require two-step legalisation.
- **Updated employer reference letters.** Reference letters older than six months should be re-obtained on current letterhead.

THE QUESTION: "What if I cannot complete everything within sixty days?"

What They Assess

The sixty-day window is fixed by regulation. The Department of Home Affairs does not grant extensions on the basis of difficulty obtaining

documents. Lodging a complete application by the deadline is the only path to a granted visa from this invitation.

How to Answer

- Within the first week, identify which documents will take the longest. Police certificates from some countries (India PCC, Philippines NBI clearance, Kenya CID clearance) take six to eight weeks.
- Where a document genuinely cannot be obtained within sixty days, lodge with the substantive application complete and indicate that the missing document will follow. The Department may issue a procedural fairness letter requesting the document.
- If catastrophic circumstances prevent lodgement (medical emergency, natural disaster), document the circumstances; you may seek to lodge fresh after the invitation lapses, though this requires a fresh round of invitation.
- Consider whether to engage a registered migration agent or Australian legal practitioner to manage the lodgement; the increased cost is small relative to the risk of self-represented errors during the time-pressured window.

Do Not Say

- Do not submit incomplete evidence with a promise to "send the rest later" without documenting why.
- Do not submit fabricated or mocked-up documents to meet the deadline; this engages PIC 4020 and ends the visa pathway entirely.
- Do not allow the invitation to lapse without active engagement with the Department.

DECLARATION RISK

The sixty-day window is regulated and inflexible. Submitting fabricated police certificates, fabricated employer letters, or doctored bank statements to meet the deadline engages Public Interest Criterion 4020 of the Migration Regulations 1994. A finding of bogus documents or false or misleading

information triggers a three-year exclusion from grant of certain visa subclasses and may be referred for criminal investigation under section 234 of the Migration Act 1958. Always lodge truthful documents, even if late, rather than fabricated documents on time.

Chapter 25

Lodging the Visa Application Itself

The substantive visa application is lodged through ImmiAccount, accessed from the same dashboard as the EOI. The visa application form is substantially longer than the EOI and asks for fuller information about your history, your family, your previous immigration applications, and your character.

Form 80 — Personal Particulars

Form 80 is the supplementary character and history form required for most permanent skilled visa applications. It is comprehensive: every address you have lived at for the past ten years, every employment for the same period, every international travel for the past ten years, every family member, every association you have belonged to, and every prior visa application to any country. Form 80 is the form that uncovers inconsistencies between the EOI and the truth, and it is the form most heavily scrutinised by case officers.

THE QUESTION: "How do I complete Form 80 without inconsistencies with my EOI?"

What They Assess

Whether the data points in Form 80 — names, dates, addresses, employments, family members, travel history — match the EOI, the skills assessment, and any prior immigration applications to Australia or other countries. Discrepancies are flagged automatically and trigger procedural fairness inquiries.

How to Answer

- Use the EOI and supporting documents as a master reference; transcribe Form 80 fields directly from the EOI where the same fact is asked.

- For travel history, use passport stamps, e-visa records, and entry/exit records from countries with electronic systems. Reconstruct from credit card statements and email archives where stamp records are missing.
- For family members, list every parent, sibling, and child with full name, date of birth, citizenship, and current address.
- For prior immigration applications, list every application to Australia, Canada, USA, UK, New Zealand, and any other country, with file reference numbers and outcomes.
- For associations, list every professional, religious, political, or community organisation. The bar for "association" in Form 80 is broader than most applicants assume.

Do Not Say

- Do not omit a prior failed immigration application, even if it was many years ago in a different country.
- Do not omit a family member in a country with sensitive characteristics; the bar is disclosure, not exclusion.
- Do not approximate dates that you can verify with documents; precision is the standard.

DECLARATION RISK

Form 80 is the form most heavily used by case officers to identify misrepresentation. Inconsistencies between Form 80 and the EOI, between Form 80 and the skills assessment, between Form 80 and prior immigration applications, or between Form 80 and information available through international information-sharing arrangements (Five Country Conference Protocol, ASEAN information sharing, Quad immigration cooperation) are flagged automatically. Misrepresentation findings engage Public Interest Criterion 4020 and result in three-year exclusion from certain visa subclasses, plus reputational consequences across other immigration jurisdictions.

Visa Application Charge

Visa application charges (VAC) are payable at lodgement. For subclasses 189, 190, and 491, the primary applicant VAC is in the order of AUD 4,765 in 2026, with secondary applicant charges for spouse (around AUD 2,385) and dependants (around AUD 1,190 each over 18, AUD 1,200 each under 18). Verify current charges on the Department of Home Affairs website before lodgement; charges adjust periodically.

Payment is by credit card or PayPal at the time of lodgement. The transaction sometimes fails on first attempt due to international fraud filters; have a backup card ready and notify your bank in advance of the planned charge amount and merchant.

Decision-Ready Lodgement

A "decision-ready" lodgement is one where every required document is uploaded with the application, leaving no gaps for the case officer to request later. Decision-ready lodgements are processed faster than incomplete lodgements. The components of decision-ready are:

- Complete Form 80 with no gaps.
- Complete Form 1221 (additional personal particulars) for primary and dependants over 18.
- All identity documents (passports, birth certificates, marriage certificates, all apostilled or notarised as required).
- All employment evidence — contracts, payslips, tax records, statutory contributions, employer letters — for every claimed period.
- Skills assessment outcome letter and any annexes.
- Current English test result.
- Police clearance certificates from every country where the applicant has lived twelve months or more in the past ten years.
- Health examination results (Bupa Medical Visa Services panel).

- Settlement funds bank statement (some states require this; federal does not require but is good practice).
- Statement of relationship for de facto partners.
- Custody / consent documentation for children of separated parents.

Chapter 26

Health, Character, and Final Decision Stages

Once the visa is lodged, three further hurdles remain before grant: health clearance, character clearance, and final case officer decision. Each can introduce delays or refusals, and each carries its own evidence standard.

Health Examinations

Health examinations for permanent skilled visas include a general medical examination, a chest X-ray, an HIV test for applicants over 15 years of age, and additional tests where indicated by medical history. Examinations must be completed at panel doctors approved by Bupa Medical Visa Services; results are uploaded directly to the Department through the panel doctor system.

Most applicants pass health screening straightforwardly. Common areas of concern that may require further evaluation include previous tuberculosis exposure, current pregnancy, controlled chronic conditions (diabetes, hypertension), or a history of major surgery. Where a Medical Officer of the Commonwealth raises a concern under the health requirement (regulation 2.25A of the Migration Regulations 1994), a Health Waiver may be available for some categories of applicants and conditions; a Health Waiver application is a separate process and can extend the visa decision timeline by months.

Character Clearances

Character clearance requires police certificates from every country where you have lived twelve months or more in the past ten years. The Department may also conduct internal character checks against international intelligence-sharing databases.

THE QUESTION: "I have a minor offence on my record. Should I declare it?"

What They Assess

The character requirement under section 501 of the Migration Act 1958 is broader than a criminal record. The Department considers all conduct relevant to character, including offences, charges (even if dismissed), associations, and conduct in past visa applications.

How to Answer

- Declare every offence, charge, caution, fine above a small threshold, or pending matter, regardless of whether it appears on a current police certificate. Spent or expunged convictions in your home jurisdiction may still need to be declared.
- For each declared matter, provide the date, jurisdiction, charge or offence, plea or finding, and disposition (sentence, fine, dismissal). Include the original police summary if available.
- For matters that have been formally pardoned or expunged, attach the pardon or expungement order.
- For pending matters, declare them and note the next court date.
- Where you are a member of an organisation that may have associations relevant to character (motor cycle clubs with criminal associations, banned political organisations), seek legal advice before lodgement.

Do Not Say

- Do not assume a spent conviction does not need to be declared because the police certificate does not list it.
- Do not omit a youthful offence on the basis of age; declare it with context.
- Do not minimise or paraphrase the offence; describe it accurately.

DECLARATION RISK

Character disclosures are governed by Public Interest Criterion 4001 of the Migration Regulations 1994. Failure to disclose offences, charges, or associations relevant to character — even if not detected during the initial check — may result in visa refusal or, post-grant, visa cancellation under section 116 or section 501 of the Migration Act 1958. The Department's information-sharing arrangements with the Five Country Conference (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States) and other partners surface character information from multiple jurisdictions. Always disclose; never assume non-detection.

COMPARATIVE NOTE — CHARACTER DISCLOSURE

Australia: Australia's character requirement under section 501 of the Migration Act 1958 is broad: it covers convictions, charges, associations, and conduct, regardless of whether matters have been formally expunged. Disclosure is required at visa application; non-disclosure engages PIC 4020.

Canada (IRCC): IRCC requires disclosure of all criminal convictions, charges, and arrests on the criminal-inadmissibility application questions and on the IMM 5669 schedule. Section 36 of the IRPA covers serious criminality and criminality inadmissibility, with overcoming pathways including criminal rehabilitation (after a waiting period) and a temporary resident permit.

United States (USCIS): USCIS requires disclosure of all arrests, charges, and convictions on the I-485 (and I-130 / I-140 supporting forms). Section 212(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act sets out criminal grounds of inadmissibility, with waivers under sections 212(h) and 212(i) potentially available depending on the offence and the applicant's circumstances.

Final Decision and Grant

Once health and character clearances are complete and the case officer is satisfied with the substantive merits, the visa is granted. Grant notification is issued by email and visible in ImmiAccount. The grant letter sets out the visa subclass granted, the visa class designation (Permanent Resident or Provisional Resident), the date of grant, and any conditions.

For 189 and 190 grants, the visa is permanent on grant. The grant date starts the clock on Australian residence for citizenship purposes (four years' lawful residence, with at least one year as a permanent resident, before citizenship application).

For 491 grants, the visa is provisional. The 491 holder must comply with regional residence and work requirements, ultimately progressing to 191 PR after at least three years of compliant residence including at least one taxation year of meeting income thresholds.

Procedural Fairness Letters

In a minority of cases, the case officer raises a concern about a specific aspect of the application before deciding. The concern is communicated through a procedural fairness letter (sometimes called a "show cause" letter or a section 57 invitation to comment), giving the applicant a defined response window — typically 28 days — to provide additional information or rebuttal.

Procedural fairness letters are not refusals; they are opportunities to address concerns. Common subjects include: discrepancies between Form 80 and the EOI; verification doubts on a specific employer reference letter; concerns about the genuineness of a relationship; or character information surfaced through international cooperation.

The right response to a procedural fairness letter is detailed, evidence-backed, and timely. Engage your registered migration agent or Australian legal practitioner immediately on receipt; the response window is short and the consequence of an inadequate response is refusal.

PART VI

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

Recovery Pathways and Plan B Options

PURPOSE & RISK

Part VI addresses the moments where the primary pathway has broken down. The risk this part addresses is despair: the applicant who treats the first refusal as a final answer and walks away from a migration plan that could have been recovered with the right pivot. Most negative outcomes in skilled migration have a structured recovery pathway. A negative skills assessment can be appealed or re-applied at a different code. A lapsed invitation can sometimes be re-issued. A refused visa can be reviewed at the Administrative Review Tribunal in some categories. The chapters below set out the diagnostic and the decision tree for each common failure mode.

Chapter 27

Common EOI Mistakes That Trigger Refusals

Most EOI-related refusals fall into one of seven recurring patterns. Recognising them in advance is the single best defence against being caught by them.

Pattern One: Inflated Points Score

The applicant claims English Superior on a test where the writing band is 7.5, claims 8 years of skilled employment when 5 of those years are pre-employment by the assessing authority, or claims partner skills points where the partner's skills assessment is still in progress. At invitation, the case officer recalculates the score against the evidence and refuses on the ground that the applicant did not meet the points score at which the invitation issued.

Defence: complete the honest score worksheet in Chapter 9 before lodgement. Refuse to claim points the evidence does not support.

Pattern Two: Inconsistency Between EOI and Form 80

The EOI lists employment from January 2020 to December 2024 at a particular employer. Form 80 lists the same employment with end-date November 2024. The case officer reads both forms side by side and treats the discrepancy as a material misrepresentation. Refusal under PIC 4020.

Defence: maintain a master facts sheet listing every date, employer, address, name, and family member, and transcribe directly from the master to every form. Never let two forms say different things about the same fact.

Pattern Three: ANZSCO Code That Does Not Match Duties

The applicant has a positive skills assessment at code 261313 (Software Engineer) but the duties evidenced in employment letters describe project management and team leadership consistent with code 135112 (ICT Project Manager). The case officer concludes that the applicant's actual employment is not at the nominated occupation. Refusal on the ground that the position is not in the nominated occupation.

Defence: confirm before lodgement that the duties in your employment letters and the duties in the ANZSCO task list for your nominated code align. Where they do not, either obtain new letters describing duties in line with the nominated code (only if those duties were genuinely performed) or revise the nominated code to match the duties.

Pattern Four: English Test Result Validity Issue

The English test result was within validity at EOI lodgement but expired during the 60-day visa lodgement window. The case officer requires a current test result at time of decision; the applicant has not re-tested. Refusal on the ground of insufficient evidence of English ability.

Defence: re-sit the test before validity expires when the EOI is older than two years. Track expiry dates against the projected invitation timing.

Pattern Five: Skills Assessment Validity Issue

Most skills assessments are valid for three years from issue. An applicant who lodged an EOI with a fresh skills assessment, sat in the pool for two years, and is then invited may find the assessment expires before visa lodgement. Refusal on the ground that the skills assessment is no longer current.

Defence: track skills assessment expiry. Where expiry approaches, apply for renewal or fresh assessment well before invitation.

Pattern Six: Partner Skills Claim Without Evidence

The applicant claimed 10 partner-skills points based on a partner's skills assessment that was "expected" at EOI lodgement but was not yet in hand. At invitation, the partner's skills assessment was still pending or had been declined. Refusal on the ground that points claimed are not evidenced.

Defence: do not claim partner skills points until the partner's positive skills assessment outcome is in hand and current.

Pattern Seven: Withholding Prior Visa Refusals

The applicant had a UK visitor visa refused in 2019 and did not declare it on Form 80. The Department's information-sharing surfaces the prior refusal. Refusal under PIC 4020 for misleading information.

Defence: declare every prior visa refusal, every prior visa application (granted or refused), and every prior interaction with any country's immigration system. Five Country Conference data-sharing surfaces these matters routinely.

Chapter 28

Negative Skills Assessment: Review or Pivot

A negative skills assessment is one of the most demoralising events in skilled migration, but it is rarely fatal to the file. Three structured pathways exist. Picking the right one is a function of why the assessment was negative.

Diagnostic: Why Was the Assessment Negative?

Read the negative outcome letter carefully. The assessing authority will articulate one or more reasons for the negative outcome. Common reasons map to recovery pathways:

36. **Documentary insufficiency.** The assessor identifies missing or insufficient documents — incomplete payslip series, missing tax records, employer reference letters lacking required content. Recovery pathway: review or fresh application with complete documents.
37. **Duty mismatch.** The assessor concludes the employment was not at the ANZSCO skill level or in the nominated code. Recovery pathway: pivot to a different code that the duties actually support, with disclosure.
38. **Qualification not recognised.** The qualification is not at the level claimed or the institution is not recognised. Recovery pathway: an alternative pathway (e.g., recognition of prior learning, a bridging program), or pivot to a different visa category.
39. **Insufficient post-qualification employment.** The required years of post-qualification skilled employment are not met. Recovery pathway: continue accumulating qualifying employment until the threshold is met, then re-apply.

40. **Genuineness concerns.** The assessor questions the genuineness of documents or claims. Recovery pathway: address the specific concerns with stronger evidence, or pivot to a different visa pathway.

Pathway One: Internal Review

Most assessing authorities offer an internal review process. The review is not a fresh assessment; it is a reconsideration of the original file. Reviews work where the original outcome was based on a documentation gap that can now be filled, or where the assessor misinterpreted documents that are clearer on second look. Reviews do not work where the underlying issue is duty mismatch or qualification recognition.

Review timelines vary by authority. ACS, EA, and VETASSESS typically respond to reviews within four to six weeks. Fees apply. Submit only the documents that address the specific reason for the original negative outcome; do not submit a complete refresh of the file.

Pathway Two: Fresh Application at the Same Code

Where the issue is documentary insufficiency and a review would not address it (because new documents fundamentally change the picture), a fresh application at the same code may be appropriate. Disclose the prior negative outcome; do not attempt to conceal it. Most authorities require the prior outcome to be referenced on the new application form.

Pathway Three: Application at a Different Code

Where the duties genuinely match a different ANZSCO code, a fresh application at the new code may succeed. The prior negative outcome must be disclosed. If the new application is at a code assessed by a different authority, the disclosure obligation transfers (you must inform the new authority of the prior outcome at the prior authority).

Pathway Four: Pivot to a Different Visa Pathway

Where points-based skilled migration is not viable, alternative pathways may be. Subclass 482 employer-sponsored uses occupation eligibility rather than a Department-administered points assessment, but requires a sponsoring employer. Subclass 494 employer-sponsored regional has similar logic. Subclass 186 Employer Nomination Scheme is a permanent employer-sponsored pathway with various streams.

What Not to Do

Three reactions worsen the position.

- **Do not lodge a fresh assessment without disclosing the prior negative outcome.** Authorities share information; non-disclosure is detected and engages PIC 4020.
- **Do not apply at multiple codes simultaneously hoping one will succeed.** Multiple parallel applications evidence inconsistency in your duty claims.
- **Do not give up the file entirely.** Most negative outcomes have a structured recovery pathway; engage a registered migration agent for a fresh diagnostic.

Chapter 29

When the Invitation Lapses or You Run Out of Time

An invitation lapses when the applicant does not lodge a complete visa application within the sixty-day window. A lapsed invitation is not, on its face, a refusal; the applicant's EOI typically remains in the pool, although the SkillSelect rules treat a lapsed invitation as having "consumed" one of the two invitation opportunities ordinarily available per EOI.

What Happens to a Lapsed Invitation

On lapse, the EOI typically remains live but with a flag indicating an unused invitation. The Department of Home Affairs may continue inviting from the EOI in subsequent rounds, or may suspend further invitations from that EOI depending on the circumstances of lapse. A second lapse is generally fatal to the EOI; the EOI will not be invited a third time without explanation.

Why Invitations Lapse

Common reasons:

- Documents not obtainable in the window (police certificates from slow-issuing jurisdictions; original transcripts from institutions that have closed or merged).
- Health concerns identified during the medical examination requiring further investigation.
- Loss of points between EOI and invitation (a birthday crossing an age band, a partner failing to obtain a skills assessment in time, a state nomination not progressing).
- Personal or family emergencies during the window.
- Discovery of evidence problems that cannot be reconciled in the window.

Recovery Pathways After Lapse

Three pathways exist.

41. **Wait for re-invitation.** If the EOI remains in the pool and the points score has not declined, the EOI may receive a second invitation in a subsequent round. This is the simplest pathway but is not guaranteed.
42. **Withdraw and re-lodge.** Withdraw the existing EOI and lodge a fresh EOI under the same or different visa subclass. The fresh EOI starts with a fresh Date of Effect. Two practical concerns: the underlying claims must be consistent with the prior EOI, and any reason for the lapse must be addressable in the fresh lodgement.
43. **Pivot to a different pathway.** Where the lapse signals that the points-based pathway is not viable, consider employer-sponsored pathways (482, 494, 186), DAMA pathways (covered in our DAMA Pathway Guide for Australia 2026), or other permanent residence routes.

Lapses That Indicate a Deeper Problem

Where the lapse occurred because of a fundamental issue (a negative skills assessment surfacing, a character issue, a relationship breakdown affecting partner-skills points), the right response is not re-lodgement but a fresh diagnostic. The lapse signals that the original strategy did not survive contact with verification. A registered migration agent should re-assess the entire file before any re-lodgement.

Chapter 30

Plan B Pathways: 482, 494, and Employer-Sponsored

Skilled migration via points-based EOI is one route to Australia, not the only route. For applicants whose points score is uncompetitive, whose state nomination has not progressed, or whose primary pathway has been refused, employer-sponsored pathways offer a structured alternative. The trade-off is that employer-sponsored pathways require a sponsoring employer and a substantive offer of skilled employment in Australia.

Subclass 482 — Skills in Demand (formerly TSS)

The 482 visa is a temporary visa allowing an Australian employer to sponsor a skilled worker for up to four years. The Skills in Demand framework (which replaced the Temporary Skill Shortage stream in late 2024) operates three streams.

- **Specialist Skills Pathway.** For high-earning specialist occupations (with an income threshold currently in the AUD 135,000+ range). Provides faster processing and broader occupation eligibility.
- **Core Skills Pathway.** For occupations on the Core Skills Occupation List, with an income threshold matching the Temporary Skilled Migration Income Threshold (TSMIT, around AUD 73,150 in early 2026).
- **Essential Skills Pathway.** For lower-paid occupations meeting industry-specific labour market criteria; eligibility is narrow and sector-specific.

The 482 is a stepping stone, not a destination. The most common pathway is to enter Australia on a 482, accumulate Australian skilled employment (which scores higher on the points test than offshore employment), build local networks, and either apply for permanent residence under subclass

186 (Employer Nomination Scheme) or pivot back to a points-based 189/190/491 with a stronger profile.

Subclass 494 — Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional

The 494 is a five-year provisional regional visa for skilled workers sponsored by an Australian employer in a designated regional area. The 494 is an employer-sponsored equivalent to the 491; both lead to permanent residence under subclass 191 after compliant residence and work in regional Australia.

The 494 is well-suited for applicants who have a regional employer offer but whose general points score is uncompetitive for nomination-based pathways. The employer must hold a sponsor approval and a labour market test exemption or successful labour market testing for the position.

Subclass 186 — Employer Nomination Scheme

The 186 is a permanent employer-sponsored visa with three streams.

- **Direct Entry stream.** For applicants with at least three years of full-time skilled employment in the nominated occupation and a positive skills assessment.
- **Temporary Residence Transition (TRT) stream.** For 482 holders who have worked for the same sponsoring employer for at least two years on a 482 visa.
- **Labour Agreement stream.** For employers with a Labour Agreement covering specified occupations and concessions.

The 186 TRT stream is the cleanest pathway from temporary to permanent for many skilled workers. The strategy is to enter on a 482, satisfy two years of qualifying employment with the sponsor, and transition to 186 PR without competing in SkillSelect at all.

Designated Area Migration Agreements (DAMA)

DAMAs are agreements between the Federal Government and specified regional bodies (typically state governments or regional development authorities) that allow concessions to standard skilled migration eligibility for specified occupations in specified geographic areas. DAMAs operate in the Northern Territory, parts of Western Australia, parts of Queensland, parts of South Australia, and several other regions. DAMA pathways are covered in detail in the companion DAMA Pathway Guide for Australia 2026.

Choosing Between Plan B Pathways

The right Plan B depends on three factors.

First, do you have an employer offer? If yes, employer-sponsored pathways are the cleanest route. If no, employer-sponsored pathways require building a job-search strategy first.

Second, are you onshore or offshore? Onshore applicants have access to onshore work-while-applying provisions and can accumulate Australian employment that scores higher on the points test. Offshore applicants need to engineer an entry pathway (visitor, student, or 482) before strategy refinements become available.

Third, what does your timeline allow? Some Plan B pathways take two to three years to mature (482 plus 186 TRT). Others can grant within twelve months (DAMA, direct 186, or 494 with employer offer in hand).

No Plan B is universally right. The right Plan B for your file depends on a clear-headed reassessment of your profile, your evidence, your geographic preferences, and your timeline. A registered migration agent or Australian legal practitioner can provide that reassessment.

Conclusion: Twelve-Month Roadmap from Today

A migration plan that takes twelve months to mature is faster, cleaner, and cheaper than one that takes three years through trial and error. The roadmap below assumes you start from the position most readers of this book occupy in February 2026: an offshore skilled professional in your late twenties or early thirties, with a bachelor degree, three to seven years of skilled employment, English at Competent or Proficient, and no positive skills assessment yet in hand. Adapt the timeline to your specific starting position.

Months One to Three — Foundation

44. Identify your nominated ANZSCO code based on the work you actually do; cross-check against the Core Skills Occupation List and the relevant state lists.
45. Apply for skills assessment with the relevant assessing authority. Allow eight to twelve weeks.
46. Sit your first English test (IELTS or PTE). If you score Proficient (or Superior) you have your target English level. If you score Competent or below, plan a second test in months four to five with focused preparation.
47. Build the documentary chain for skilled employment: contracts, payslips, tax records, statutory contributions, and employer reference letters in the format required by your assessing authority.
48. Complete the honest score worksheet (Chapter 9). Identify the gap between your current score and the competitive 2026 cut-off for your occupation in your target visa subclass.

Months Four to Six — Strengthening

49. Receive your skills assessment outcome (or pivot if negative — see Chapter 28).

50. If your initial English was below Proficient, sit the second test with the focused preparation you scheduled.
51. Engage your partner in skills assessment (if applicable) and English testing.
52. Identify your two or three target states for nomination (see Part IV). Begin building state-specific evidence: family connections, employer engagement, sector research.
53. Apostille all foundational documents (qualifications, marriage certificate, birth certificates of children).

Months Seven to Nine — Lodgement

54. Lodge your SkillSelect EOI(s) for the visa subclasses your honest profile supports.
55. Lodge state nomination applications for the states where your evidence supports a competitive application.
56. Where state nomination grants, expect SkillSelect invitation within days; where it does not, monitor federal rounds for direct 189 invitation if your score is in range.
57. Order police certificates from every country where you have lived twelve months or more in the last ten years; some take six to eight weeks.

Months Ten to Twelve — Lodgement and Decision

58. On invitation, lodge the substantive visa application within sixty days. Use the master document checklist in Appendix B.
59. Complete biometrics and health examinations within the first three weeks of the window.
60. Respond to any procedural fairness letter within the response window with detailed evidence.
61. On grant, plan your relocation: temporary accommodation, schools, banking, GP registration, and the first ninety days of employment search.

Twelve months is achievable for the well-prepared file. Some files take longer because of skills assessment delays, English plateau, state nomination cycles, or character or health complications. The principle is the same regardless of timeline: prepare before you lodge, lodge with documentary evidence in hand for every claim, and respond to every procedural step within the time it allows. Australia rewards preparation. Now that you have read this book, you are prepared.

Appendix A

Glossary of Terms

ANZSCO. Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations. The six-digit occupational classification used by the Department of Home Affairs to identify nominated occupations.

ACS. Australian Computer Society. The skills assessing authority for most ICT occupations in skilled migration.

AHPRA. Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. The body that registers regulated health practitioners in Australia and acts as the de facto skills assessor for many health occupations.

Apostille. A standardised certification of a public document for international use under the Hague Apostille Convention.

Assessing Authority. The body designated by the Department of Home Affairs to assess skills for a particular ANZSCO code.

Bridging Visa. A temporary visa allowing an applicant to remain lawfully in Australia while a substantive visa application is processed.

CAPIC. Canadian Association of Professional Immigration Consultants. The Canadian professional association for RCICs.

Core Skills Occupation List (CSOL). The federal occupation list introduced in late 2024 covering occupations eligible for the 482 Skills in Demand visa and feeding into general skilled migration eligibility.

Date of Effect. The date and time at which an EOI's current points score was first achieved. Used as a tiebreaker in invitation rounds.

DAMA. Designated Area Migration Agreement. A regional agreement allowing concessions to standard skilled migration eligibility in specified areas.

Decision Ready. A visa application lodged with all required documents at the time of lodgement, leaving no gaps for the case officer to request.

EA. Engineers Australia. The skills assessing authority for engineering occupations.

EOI. Expression of Interest. The application lodged in SkillSelect indicating an applicant's wish to be considered for a skilled visa.

Form 80. Personal Particulars for Character Assessment. A supplementary form required for most permanent skilled visa applications.

Form 1221. Additional Personal Particulars Information. A supplementary form required for primary and adult dependant applicants.

Health Waiver. A discretionary waiver of the standard health requirement for certain visa subclasses and conditions.

ImmiAccount. The online portal at online.immi.gov.au through which all Department of Home Affairs interactions take place.

Invitation Round. The periodic SkillSelect process by which the Department issues invitations to apply for visas to ranked EOIs.

IELTS. International English Language Testing System. An English test approved by the Department for skilled migration.

IRCC. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. The Canadian federal department administering immigration.

MIA. Migration Institute of Australia. The professional association for Australian registered migration agents.

Ministerial Direction No. 105. The current ministerial direction setting priority processing for skilled migration applications, prioritising healthcare, teaching, and regional applications.

NAATI. National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters. The body issuing credentialled community language certifications.

Nomination. The process by which a state, territory, or eligible relative supports a skilled visa application, providing additional points and pathway eligibility.

OET. Occupational English Test. An English test for healthcare professionals approved by the Department.

PIC 4001. Public Interest Criterion 4001. The character requirement under the Migration Regulations 1994.

PIC 4020. Public Interest Criterion 4020. The misleading information and bogus documents requirement under the Migration Regulations 1994.

Points Test. The points-based assessment under Schedule 6D of the Migration Regulations 1994 for visa subclasses 189, 190, and 491.

Procedural Fairness Letter. A letter from the Department giving an applicant an opportunity to comment on a concern before the application is decided.

PR. Permanent Residence. The status of holders of permanent visas, including subclasses 189, 190, 186, and 191.

PTE. Pearson Test of English Academic. An English test approved by the Department.

RCIC. Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant. A consultant licensed by the College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants in Canada.

SkillSelect. The online platform run by the Department through which all EOIs are lodged.

Subclass 189. Skilled Independent visa. A permanent skilled visa requiring no nomination.

Subclass 190. Skilled Nominated visa. A permanent skilled visa requiring state or territory nomination.

Subclass 191. Permanent Residence (Skilled Regional) visa. The pathway to permanent residence for compliant 491 and 494 holders.

Subclass 491. Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) visa. A five-year provisional regional skilled visa.

Subclass 482. Skills in Demand visa. The temporary employer-sponsored skilled visa replacing the previous TSS framework.

Subclass 494. Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (Provisional) visa. The employer-sponsored regional equivalent of the 491.

TOEFL. Test of English as a Foreign Language. An English test approved by the Department for skilled migration.

TRA. Trades Recognition Australia. The skills assessing authority for trade occupations.

TSMIT. Temporary Skilled Migration Income Threshold. The minimum salary threshold for the 482 Core Skills Pathway.

USCIS. United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. The US federal agency administering immigration applications.

VAC. Visa Application Charge. The fee paid at the time of substantive visa application.

VETASSESS. Vocational Education and Training Assessment Services. A skills assessing authority for many professional and technical occupations.

Appendix B

Master Document Checklist

Use this checklist as your master document inventory from EOI lodgement through visa grant. Mark each item "in hand," "in progress," or "to obtain." Aim to be at "in hand" for every applicable item before invitation.

Identity Documents — Primary Applicant

- Current passport (bio data page).
- All previous passports (bio data pages, all visa pages, all entry/exit stamps).
- Birth certificate (with apostille if required).
- National ID card (where applicable).
- Marriage certificate (with apostille if required).
- Divorce decree (where applicable).
- Death certificate of prior spouse (where applicable).
- Name change documents (where applicable).

Identity Documents — Dependants

- Spouse / de facto partner: passport, birth certificate, prior marriage / divorce documents.
- Each child: passport, birth certificate showing both parents, custody / consent documentation if separated parents.

Educational Qualifications

- Original degree certificates (with apostille).
- Original academic transcripts (with apostille).
- Statement of completion or pending qualification (where applicable).
- Professional certifications (CISSP, PMP, AWS, etc.).

Skills Assessment

- Skills assessment outcome letter (current within validity period).
- Underlying assessment application and any annexes.
- Any review or re-issue correspondence.

English Language

- Current English test result (IELTS / PTE / TOEFL / OET) within three-year validity.
- Test report form or score report PDF.

Employment Evidence — For Each Claimed Period

- Employment contract (signed by both parties).
- Promotion letters and contract amendments.
- Monthly payslips for the entire period (continuous, no gaps).
- Tax records (income tax returns, Form 16 / W-2 / equivalent).
- Statutory contributions records (PF / EPF passbook, social security, superannuation).
- Salary bank statements (entire period, showing monthly credits matched to employer).
- Employer reference letter on company letterhead (job title, dates, duties, salary, contact).

Partner Skills Evidence (where claimed)

- Partner's skills assessment outcome.
- Partner's English test result.
- Partner's qualification documents and employment evidence.

Relationship Evidence (de facto only)

- Joint bank account statements (12 months minimum).

- Shared lease or property documents.
- Joint utility accounts.
- Joint travel itineraries and photographs.
- Statutory declarations from each partner explaining relationship history.
- Statements from family and friends supporting genuineness of relationship.

Character

- Police clearance certificate from each country lived in for 12+ months in past 10 years.
- Court records for any declared offence or charge.
- Pardon or expungement documentation (where applicable).

Health

- Health examination completed at Bupa Medical Visa Services panel doctor.
- Specialist reports for any pre-existing conditions.

State Nomination

- State nomination application reference and outcome.
- Settlement plan for the nominating state.
- Settlement funds bank statement (within 30 days).

Visa Application Forms

- Form 80 (Personal Particulars for Character Assessment).
- Form 1221 (Additional Personal Particulars Information).
- Form 1229 / 956 / other supplementary forms as required.

Appendix C

60-Day Visa Lodgement Calendar Template

The sixty-day window between invitation and visa lodgement compresses many tasks into a tight timeline. Use this template as a master schedule. Adapt by the actual invitation date.

Days 1 to 7 — Mobilisation

- Day 1: Save invitation letter; verify subclass and points.
- Day 1: Calculate exact 60-day deadline.
- Day 2: Run full document inventory against Appendix B.
- Day 2-3: Order police certificates from slow-issuing jurisdictions.
- Day 3-5: Book biometric and health examination appointments.
- Day 4-6: Request updated employer reference letters.
- Day 5-7: Engage migration agent or legal practitioner if not already retained.

Days 8 to 21 — Document Assembly

- Day 8-14: Complete Form 80 (allow 4-6 hours of focused work).
- Day 8-14: Complete Form 1221.
- Day 10-15: Apostille any documents that require it.
- Day 14-21: Complete biometric appointments.
- Day 14-21: Complete health examinations.
- Day 15-21: Cross-check Form 80 against EOI for inconsistencies.

Days 22 to 45 — Verification and Refinement

- Day 22-28: Receive police certificates as they arrive.
- Day 22-30: Verify health examination results uploaded.
- Day 25-35: Final review of evidence pack against checklist.
- Day 30-40: Address any document gaps with alternative sources.
- Day 35-45: Final consistency check across all forms.

Days 46 to 55 — Lodgement Preparation

- Day 46-50: Quality-control review by migration agent or legal practitioner.
- Day 50-53: Prepare visa application charge payment (verify card limits).
- Day 53-55: Final document upload preparation.

Days 56 to 60 — Lodgement

- Day 56-58: Lodge visa application with all evidence.
- Day 58-60: Buffer for technical issues at lodgement.

Lodging on Day 56 to 58 leaves a buffer for technical issues. Do not aim for Day 60; one technical glitch can lapse the invitation.

Appendix D

Pre-EOI and Pre-Nomination Quality Control Checklists

These two checklists are quality control tools for the practitioner or applicant about to take a final action. Run through every item before clicking submit.

Pre-EOI Checklist

Run before lodging or updating an EOI.

62. **Identity.** Name in EOI matches passport exactly. Date of birth matches passport. Country of birth and citizenship match passport. Any prior names disclosed.
63. **ANZSCO code.** Selected code matches the code on positive skills assessment. Code is on current Core Skills Occupation List. Code is on relevant state list for any state nomination targeting.
64. **Visa subclasses.** Subclasses selected are realistic for honest points. 491 is selected only with genuine intent to live regionally.
65. **Skills assessment.** Positive assessment in hand. Within validity (typically 3 years). Reference number entered correctly. Issuing authority entered correctly.
66. **English.** Current valid test result in hand. Lowest band score supports claimed level. Test within 3-year validity at projected invitation date.
67. **Employment.** Every employment listed in chronological order with no gaps. Dates match contracts and reference letters. Only post-deduction periods marked points-claimable. ANZSCO skill level confirmed for each claimed period.

68. **Qualifications.** Highest qualification correctly classified.
Australian study claims supportable by CRICOS evidence.
STEM claims supportable by qualification level and discipline.
69. **Partner.** Relationship status declared honestly. Partner skills points only claimed if positive skills assessment, English test, and age all in hand. Single applicant points only claimed if genuinely single.
70. **State nomination.** Selected states are states with genuine intent to live in. Eligibility criteria for each selected state checked.
71. **Honest score worksheet.** Sum of evidenced claims matches claimed total. Any gap closed before lodgement.

Pre-Nomination Submission Checklist

Run before submitting a state or territory nomination application.

72. **Eligibility verified.** State's current occupation list confirmed (not a stale snapshot). State-specific points or matrix score self-assessed. State-specific English threshold met. State-specific work experience threshold met.
73. **Connection evidence.** Family ties documented (residency status, address, relationship statement). Prior study evidence documented (CRICOS code, dates). Prior employment evidence documented (payslips, employer letter). Current address evidence (lease or utility bill).
74. **Settlement funds.** Bank statement within 30 days of lodgement. Funds at or above state threshold for primary applicant plus dependants. Funds in applicant's own name (or jointly with spouse).
75. **Genuine commitment statement.** Specific city or region named. Concrete employer or sector engagement evidenced. Settlement plan covers first 90 days. No copied generic language.

76. **Consistency.** State application matches federal EOI on identity, occupation, employment dates, English level, and family composition. No contradictions.
77. **Documents in correct format.** All documents in PDF or as required by state portal. File sizes within state limits. Filenames clear and indexed.
78. **Application fee paid.** State nomination fee paid by accepted method. Receipt saved.
79. **Final review.** Application reviewed by registered migration agent or legal practitioner. Any flagged issues addressed before submission.

Appendix E

Red-Flag Answers Reference Guide

This appendix collects the most common red-flag answer patterns observed in EOI and state nomination applications. Each pattern is followed by the case officer's likely interpretation and the corrective answer pattern. Use this as a quick reference when reviewing draft answers.

Red-Flag Pattern 1 — Generic Commitment

Original: "I will live and work in [State]. [State] is a great place to live and has many job opportunities for my skills."

Case officer interpretation: copy-paste from a template. No genuine commitment. Likely flag for further verification.

Corrected pattern: name the specific city or region, name two or three named employers in your sector, articulate one or two state-specific economic features your skills match, name the family member or institutional connection that anchors your settlement.

Red-Flag Pattern 2 — Inflated Duties

Original: "I led a team of senior engineers, managed multi-million dollar projects, and was the chief technology decision-maker for the company."

Case officer interpretation: senior responsibilities not consistent with the salary band evidenced in the payslips, or with the position title in the contract.

Corrected pattern: describe duties accurately in the language of the ANZSCO task list, supported by salary band, position title, and team size that the contract and reference letter independently confirm.

Red-Flag Pattern 3 — Vague Employment Periods

Original: "Software Engineer at XYZ Company, approximately 2018 to 2024."

Case officer interpretation: applicant either does not know the dates or is rounding to suit a points calculation.

Corrected pattern: precise day-month-year start and end dates matching the contract, with documented evidence for any breaks.

Red-Flag Pattern 4 — Unverified Family Connection

Original: "I have family connections in [State] who have agreed to support my settlement."

Case officer interpretation: vague claim with no specifics. Likely a fabricated connection.

Corrected pattern: name the family member, provide their address, residency status, and current occupation, attach a statement from them in their own words supporting the settlement.

Red-Flag Pattern 5 — Disclosure Avoidance

Original (omission): no mention of a 2019 UK visitor visa refusal in the prior visa applications section of Form 80.

Case officer interpretation: misrepresentation by omission. PIC 4020 engaged.

Corrected pattern: full disclosure of every prior visa application to any country, with reference number, country, application date, outcome, and reason for refusal where applicable.

Red-Flag Pattern 6 — English Level Stretch

Original: applicant claims Superior English (20 points) based on overall band score of 8.0 with one band at 7.5.

Case officer interpretation: claim does not meet the regulatory threshold (Superior requires 8.0 in every band). Refusal at invitation.

Corrected pattern: claim the level the lowest band supports. Re-test the weak band before re-claiming the higher level.

Red-Flag Pattern 7 — Partner Status Ambiguity

Original: applicant declared "single" but Form 80 lists a long-term partner at the same address with shared finances.

Case officer interpretation: applicant is in a de facto relationship and should have declared accordingly. Misrepresentation engages PIC 4020.

Corrected pattern: declare relationship status that matches the substantive facts. Where uncertain about whether a relationship qualifies as de facto, seek legal advice before lodgement.

Red-Flag Pattern 8 — Settlement Plan Mismatch

Original: state nomination application names Hobart, but Form 80 address history shows applicant moving from Sydney 482 to a Melbourne 482 within the past two years.

Case officer interpretation: settlement plan inconsistent with applicant's documented intent. Likely abandonment of nominating state after grant.

Corrected pattern: align the settlement plan with the documented history. Where the applicant genuinely intends to relocate to a new state, articulate the basis for the change explicitly with supporting evidence (job offer, family relocation, study).

A Word From the Author

"If this book helped you understand your options or avoid a costly mistake, please leave an honest Amazon review. Two minutes — it helps the next person in the same situation."

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Thank you for reading!

Best wishes for your journey ahead.