

COMMUNICATION FROM AUSTRALIA

Administrative Procedures for Mode 4
Temporary Entry in Australia: the eVisa System

The following communication, dated 26 November 2004, from the delegation of Australia is being circulated to the Members of the Council for Trade in Services.

1. The focus of this paper is on one aspect of the administrative procedures for mode 4 entry into Australia, namely, the *eVisa* system. The *eVisa* has been put in place to provide efficient, and expeditious temporary entry for skilled workers for businesses in Australia. This paper describes the main features of the *eVisa* system and how it operates to facilitate Mode 4 entry into Australia.
2. Australia's temporary business entry arrangements have been streamlined to ensure entry procedures are efficient, expeditious and transparent and to simplify administrative requirements for business. The critical issue identified by business is the speedy entry of key personnel.
3. The *eVisa* system was implemented on 1 November 2003. Under the *eVisa* system, businesses operating in Australia are able to sponsor skilled overseas persons to work in Australia for specified periods of between three months and four years. There is provision for further periods of stay on application.
4. Entry to Australia under this particular visa is based on sponsorship, which is designed in part to protect overseas workers brought to Australia, ensuring that they are employed in accordance with Australian laws and conditions. These sponsorships can also be lodged on-line and processed at the same time as visa applications.
5. Australia's *eVisa* electronic visa processing arrangement is for the long stay temporary business visa. It is designed to facilitate the entry and stay of sponsored, skilled temporary entrants. These sponsored entrants effectively become the responsibility of the business sponsor. Contractual services suppliers or independent professionals may obtain a sponsor to nominate them for entry to Australia or use other visa mechanisms that may be available to meet their needs. Australia is planning to expand the *eVisa* system to cover overseas sponsored temporary entrants by the end of 2005.
6. People can lodge their applications over the internet by accessing the *eVisa* service from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) website (www.immi.gov.au).
7. The electronic visa processing system enhances transparency by providing applicants with clear and objective eligibility criteria. Additional explanatory information on each of the criteria is

available to the applicant, via help screens and drop-down menus that provide highly targeted information and obviate the need for applicants to wade through pages of material not relevant to their particular circumstances, as they complete their on-line application. People can also attach any documents to their applications on-line. Fees payable can be made on-line through the *eVisa*.

8. The *eVisa* system automatically conducts several checks and can identify if further checks are required. These are transparent and based on objective risk criteria such as overstay and visa cancellation rates. Documents for further checks, if required, are available on-line.

9. The application for the visa is received and acknowledged immediately once it is lodged. Processing is undertaken quickly as the information required is usually provided in mandatory fields of the electronic application form. Applications from around the world are processed in special business centres throughout Australia. The information from the electronically lodged applications is automatically entered into the departmental systems increasing the efficiency of the system and thereby enabling the resources to be focused on timely decision-making rather than time-consuming data entry. Approval of the application is forwarded electronically, giving speedy responses to applicants. Applicants can also check the progress of their applications on-line.

10. Processing under the *eVisa* arrangements have significantly reduced the times taken to finalise applications. It is more convenient for applicants. The Australian business community has reported that the new arrangements meet their objectives of providing speedy processing for their nominees.

11. There are currently about 60,000 holders of e-visas in Australia. Processing rates are in excess of 40,000 per annum.

12. A visa provides the right to travel to, enter and reside in Australia and the right to work. It is a single process that can be completed overseas and before making arrangements to travel to Australia. It provides certainty to travellers and service suppliers before they travel to Australia.
