XIPHIAS Immigration

PROGRAMME BROCHURE



SKILLED MIGRATION | AUSTRALIA

Subclass 494 – Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional Visa

A regional Australian employer sponsors you for a 5-year visa, with permanent residency through subclass 191 after 3 years. This is the visa that replaced the closed subclass 187.

TIMELINE

8–12 months (Home Affairs standard)

JOB OFFER

Required

XIPHIAS Immigration DMCC
www.xiphiasimmigration.ae

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+971 52 727 5101 | dubai@xiphiasimmigration.com

At a glance

COUNTRY **Australia**	ROUTE **Skilled Migration - Employer**
TIMELINE **8–12 months (Home Affairs standard)**	LANGUAGE **Competent English or the standard required for your stream**
JOB OFFER **Required**	LAST UPDATED **1 October 2026**

Overview

The **Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 494)** lets an approved Australian employer in a **designated regional area** sponsor you for a **5-year visa**, with permanent residency available through **subclass 191** after three years.

This is the visa that **replaced subclass 187**, which closed to new applications on 16 November 2019. If you were researching the 187 for regional employer sponsorship, the 494 is what you actually want.

Why it is often the better bet

There is **no points test**. In 2026 the points-tested subclass 189 invited most professional occupations at **80 to 100 points**, and issued no invitations at all in the first three months of the 2026-27 programme year. The 494 sidesteps that queue entirely — if you have a regional employer willing to nominate you, your score is irrelevant.

It also draws on a **wider occupation list**: MLTSSL, STSOL and ROL, where subclass 189 uses MLTSSL alone.

The catch worth understanding before you sign

The permanent stage is **not automatic**. Subclass 191 requires you to have held the 494 for three years **and** to have had a taxable income at or above a set threshold for at least three years while holding it. If your regional salary sits near that threshold, the permanent residency you are working towards is at risk. Ask an adviser to check the current threshold against the specific offer before you accept it.

Visa application charge

The Home Affairs visa application charge for the primary applicant is **AUD 6,140** (as displayed on 29 September 2026). Additional charges apply for each family member included in the application.

Key benefits

- 5-year visa with a clear permanent residency pathway through subclass 191 after 3 years.
- No points test — selection is by employer nomination, not by score.
- Partner and dependent children included, with work and study rights.
- Draws on a wider occupation list than subclass 189 — MLTSSL, STSOL and ROL all count.
- Lower competition than the points-tested routes, where cut-offs now reach 80-100.

Requirements

- Be nominated by an approved employer for a position in a designated regional area.
- Be under 45 years of age, unless exempt.
- Have an occupation on a relevant skilled occupation list, and a suitable skills assessment.
- Meet the English language standard for your stream.
- Meet health and character requirements.

When this route may not fit

- No approved regional employer nomination.
- Occupation not on MLTSSL, STSOL or ROL.
- Aged 45 or over at application without an exemption.
- Position located outside a designated regional area.

Skills, language and points

ACCEPTED TESTS

IELTS, PTE, OET, TOEFL iBT

MINIMUM LEVEL

Competent English or the standard required for your stream

Job offer: You must be nominated by an approved employer for a position in a designated regional area.

Costs and government fees

Programme costs

Item	Amount	Notes
Visa application charge (primary applicant)	AUD 6,140	Home Affairs VAC as displayed on 29 September 2026. Additional applicant charges apply.

Government fees

Fee	Amount	Notes
Subclass 494 — primary applicant visa application charge	AUD 6,140	

How the process works

1 **Secure a regional job offer**
Find an approved employer with a position in a designated regional area.

2 **Skills assessment**
Obtain a suitable skills assessment for your nominated occupation.

3 **Employer nomination**
Your employer lodges the nomination with Home Affairs.

4 **Lodge the visa application**
Apply for the subclass 494 and pay the visa application charge.

5 **Health, character and decision**
Complete medicals and police checks, then await the decision.

6 **Live and work regionally, then apply for PR**
After 3 years holding the 494 and meeting the income threshold, apply for subclass 191.

Questions clients ask

Is subclass 494 permanent residency?

No. It is a provisional visa valid for 5 years. You apply for the subclass 191 permanent visa after holding it for 3 years and meeting the taxable income threshold.

Is this the visa that replaced the 187?

Yes. Subclass 187 closed to new applications on 16 November 2019, and subclass 494 is its direct replacement for regional employer sponsorship.

Is there a points test?

No. Selection is by employer nomination. That is why it is often a more realistic route than subclass 189, where invitation scores now reach 80 to 100.

How long does it take?

Home Affairs processes 50% of Employer Sponsored stream applications in 8 months and 90% within 12 months. The Labour Agreement stream is faster at 4 and 12 months.

Which occupations are eligible?

Occupations on the MLTSSL, STSOL or ROL. That is a wider pool than subclass 189, which uses MLTSSL only.

What counts as regional Australia?

Designated regional areas, which exclude Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Perth, Adelaide, Hobart, Darwin, Canberra and the Gold Coast are included. Confirm your specific postcode with an adviser.

Important notes

- This is a provisional visa, not permanent residency. You hold it for 5 years and become eligible for the subclass 191 permanent visa after 3 years.
- Subclass 191 requires you to have met a taxable income threshold for at least 3 of those years. If your salary dips below it, the permanent stage is at risk — plan for this before you accept the role.
- Your visa is tied to the nominating employer and the regional location. Changing either has consequences.
- Skilled visa income thresholds were indexed on 1 July 2026. Confirm the current figure with Home Affairs before

relying on a salary number.

Compliance

- Three streams: Employer Sponsored, Labour Agreement, and Subsequent entrant.
- Occupation lists: MLTSSL, STSOL and ROL (ANZSCO 2013). All three were last re-issued effective 28 March 2026.
- Home Affairs processing times: Employer Sponsored stream — 8 months for 50% of applications, 12 months for 90%. Labour Agreement stream — 4 months and 12 months.
- Applications are processed in the order set by Ministerial Direction No. 122.
- This visa, together with subclass 491 and subclass 191, was created by the Migration Amendment (New Skilled Regional Visas) Regulations 2019 — the same instrument that closed subclass 187 to new applications.



XIPHIAS Immigration

NEXT STEP

Plan your Australia application with our Dubai team

Tell us about your profile, family and timeline. We will confirm whether **Subclass 494 – Skilled Employer Sponsored Regional Visa** fits, set out the full cost in writing and manage the application with you from start to finish.

CALL OR WHATSAPP	+971 52 727 5101
EMAIL	dubai@xiphiasimmigration.com
WEBSITE	www.xiphiasimmigration.ae
OFFICE	Jumeirah Lakes Towers, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

CREDENTIALS

- Advising clients on global mobility since 2009; XIPHIAS Immigration DMCC in Dubai since 2017.
- Named Best Immigration Consultant by The Times of India in 2022.
- Canada files handled by a CICC-licensed Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant, licence R516194.
- Australia files handled by a registered migration agent, MARA 1680615.

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