

# Skills shortage in the healthcare sector

Yes, the Australian government is actively addressing a significant skills shortage in the healthcare sector, particularly in nursing and aged care. In March 2025, the government announced measures to streamline the registration process for experienced nurses from select countries, aiming to expedite their entry into the workforce and alleviate staffing shortages. This initiative is part of a broader effort to address the projected shortfall of healthcare professionals, including nurses, GPs, and allied health workers, exacerbated by an aging population and increasing chronic conditions.

Here's a more detailed look at the situation:

Key areas of shortage:

- **Nursing:**

Australia faces a critical shortage of nurses, with projections indicating a shortfall of 100,000 nurses by 2025.

- **Aged Care:**

The aged care sector is particularly impacted, with an estimated annual need for 17,000 additional workers to maintain current care levels.

- **General Practitioners (GPs):**

A shortage of GPs is also anticipated, with some reports projecting a shortfall of over 5,000 in the coming decade.

- **Rural and Remote Areas:**

These areas are disproportionately affected, often experiencing up to 50% fewer healthcare professionals per capita compared to urban centers.

Government Response:

- **Streamlined Nurse Registration:**

Experienced nurses from specific countries can now register to work in Australia more quickly, potentially reducing processing times by up to a year.

- **Labour Agreements for Aged Care:**

The aged care industry has negotiated Labour Agreements with the government, allowing them to sponsor overseas professionals under specific visa subclasses (482 and 186).

- **Skilled Migration:**

Many healthcare roles are on state priority lists for skilled migration, offering pathways to permanent residency through visas like the Skilled Independent Visa (subclass 189), Skilled Nominated Visa (subclass 190), and Skilled Work Regional Visa (subclass 491).

- **National Skills Plan:**

The government is also focusing on vocational education, making it more inclusive and aligned with industry needs, with TAFEs playing a central role in reforms.

- **Budget Initiatives:**

The 2025-26 Federal Budget includes measures to strengthen Medicare, enhance public hospital resources, and address skill shortages, including potential salary increases and incentives for healthcare professionals.

- **Targeted Incentives:**

Incentives like salary top-ups and paid parental leave are being offered to attract and retain GPs, particularly in areas with shortages.

Factors Contributing to the Shortage:

- **Aging Population:**

An increasing number of older Australians are requiring healthcare services.

- **Rising Chronic Conditions:**

The prevalence of chronic diseases is also contributing to the growing demand for healthcare professionals.

- **Burnout and Workforce Drain:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing pressures, leading to increased burnout and early retirement among some healthcare workers.

- **Competition for Skilled Workers:**

Australia faces competition from other countries in attracting and retaining healthcare professionals.

The Australian government is actively working to address these challenges through a combination of policy changes, financial incentives, and targeted programs aimed at attracting, training, and retaining a skilled healthcare workforce.

- **Looking Into Australia's Healthcare Worker Shortage**

Hyperlink:

<https://www.medicaljobsaustralia.com/health-news-and-blog/australian-health-and-medical-occupations-in-shortage-march-2025/>

## Visa pathways for skilled workers

The Australian government is actively offering visa pathways for skilled workers in the aged care and disability sectors, particularly through Labour Agreements. These agreements aim to address workforce shortages by facilitating the recruitment of overseas workers. Specifically, the Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement provides streamlined access to visas like the Temporary Skill Shortage visa (subclass 482) and the Employer Nomination Scheme (subclass 186) for eligible workers.

Key aspects of the visa offers:

- **Labour Agreements:**

These agreements are tailored to the specific needs of the aged care and disability sectors, offering concessions on standard visa requirements.

- **Pathway to Permanent Residency:**

Workers with at least two years of full-time work experience in a direct care occupation in Australia may be eligible for a permanent employer-sponsored visa (subclass 186).

- **Temporary Visa Options:**

The Temporary Skill Shortage (subclass 482) visa can also provide a pathway to permanent residency for those who don't yet have the required work experience.

- **Employer Sponsorship:**

Employers must hold an Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement with the Department of Home Affairs to sponsor workers under these arrangements.

- **Union Involvement:**

Aged care providers who enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with relevant industry unions may be granted streamlined access to the Labour Agreement.

Who is eligible?

- **Skilled Workers:**

Individuals with relevant qualifications and experience in direct care occupations, such as registered nurses, assistant nurses, and disability support workers.

- **Employers:**

Aged care and disability service providers who have established Labour Agreements.

### **Skilled migration program,**

hyperlink <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/what-we-do/skilled-migration-program/recent-changes/new-aged-care-industry-labour-agreement#:~:text=Applicants%20can%20be%20nominated%20through,below%20in%20the%20first%20instance:>