Skilled Migration Points System: Major Overhaul Proposed for July 2026

Author: Nilesh Nandan, BBus(Accy) LLB MBA | Head of Practice, MyVisa Lawyers Pty Ltd

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What Is Being Proposed

The Australian Government is considering a **major overhaul** of the skilled migration points test, with changes potentially taking effect from **1 July 2026**. While the details have not been finalised, the direction of the proposed changes is becoming clearer.

Proposed Changes

Based on policy signals and industry consultations, the proposed changes include:

Stronger economic weighting. The points system would place greater emphasis on factors that directly contribute to economic productivity — particularly salary level, occupation demand, and employer sponsorship. This represents a shift away from the current system, which gives significant weight to age and English language proficiency.

Higher value for advanced experience. Applicants with 8 or more years of experience in high-demand occupations would receive more points than under the current system, reflecting the value of deep expertise.

Revised skills priority lists. The current occupation lists would be restructured to focus more tightly on verified shortage occupations, with regular updates based on labour market data rather than the current periodic review cycle.

Expanded regional incentives. Additional points for applicants willing to live and work in regional areas, with a broader definition of "regional" that may include some outer-metropolitan areas.

Digital evaluation platform. A new technology-driven platform for real-time matching of skilled migrants to labour market needs, potentially replacing or supplementing the current SkillSelect system.

What Is Not Changing

The fundamental structure of the points-based system — where applicants must meet a minimum points threshold to receive an invitation to apply — is expected to remain in place. The changes are to the weighting and composition of the points, not the overall framework.

What You Should Do Now

This is important: **the proposed changes have not been officially confirmed.** If you are currently preparing a skilled visa application, you should:

1. **Continue under the current rules.** Do not delay your application in anticipation of changes that may or may not eventuate.
2. **Maximise your points under the current system.** If you can improve your English score, obtain a skills assessment, or gain additional work experience before July 2026, do so.
3. **Monitor official announcements.** The Department of Home Affairs will publish details on its website if and when the changes are confirmed.
4. **Seek professional advice** if you are unsure whether to apply now or wait.

My View

If implemented as proposed, these changes would represent the most significant reform to the points test since its introduction. The shift toward economic weighting is sensible — it aligns the migration program more closely with actual labour market needs. However, I am concerned that expanded regional incentives without adequate infrastructure and services in regional areas may set migrants up for difficult experiences.

I will provide updates as more details become available. If you have questions about how these changes may affect your situation, please contact my office.

About the Author

Nilesh Nandan is the Head of Practice at MyVisa Lawyers Pty Ltd, a specialist immigration law firm with offices across Australia. With 33 years of legal experience and 27 years specialising in immigration law, Nilesh is admitted as a solicitor in New South Wales and holds a practising certificate issued by the Law Society of New South Wales under the Legal Profession Uniform Law (NSW).

Contact: 1300 558 472 | enquiry@myvisa.com.au | https://myvisa.com.au

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