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MEDIA RELEASE

30 November 2020

Further changes to support Family visa applicants

The Morrison Government is making further changes to the Family visa program to support applicants impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government has been working over recent months to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on visa holders and has already introduced a number of arrangements to support those who have been impacted. This includes providing visa holders flexibility to remain in Australia, or to continue their visa pathway even if they have been unable to travel due to the current international border restrictions.

In addition to these changes, the Government will allow certain Family visas which have been applied for outside Australia, to be granted while the visa applicant is in Australia. This temporary concession will be for people who are in Australia and are not able to travel offshore to be granted the visa due to COVID-19 related border closures.

The Government estimates the change will benefit about 4000 visa applicants currently in Australia, predominately Partner applicants.

Acting Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs Alan Tudge said the changes would be temporary and will be reviewed in line with any changes to Australia's international travel restrictions.

"These are common sense changes to reduce the impact that the travel restrictions are having on our immigration program," Mr Tudge said.

"Importantly, this will allow a foreign national who is a partner of an Australian citizen to progress their visa, without having to leave the country.

"I know this will be a relief to those Australians who were concerned that their loved one may have to leave the country with no certainty as to when they could return."

These changes are in addition to the Government's decision to almost double the number of Partner visa places in 2020-21. It is expected that three quarters of these visas will go to those already onshore, with the increase in numbers addressing nearly all the present applicants awaiting for finalisation of their visa.

The temporary concession to allow applicants to remain in Australia to progress their visa will apply to the following Family visa subclasses:

- Partner (subclass 309) visa
- Prospective Marriage (subclass 300) visa
- Child (subclass 101) visa
- Adoption (subclass 102) visa
- Dependent Child (subclass 445) visa

The changes will come into effect early 2021. Further information will be made available on the Department of Home Affairs website.

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