

## **SPONSORSHIP ACCREDITATION ELIGIBILITY (SUBCLASS 457 VISA PROGRAM)**

From 7 November 2011, the Department of Immigration & Citizenship have decided that businesses with an excellent record of legal compliance and a long and positive history of lodging subclass 457 visa applications for overseas employees, will be able to make application for “accredited sponsor” status. Accreditation will qualify them for “priority processing” of all subclass 457 nomination and visa applications. It is anticipated that processing will be finalised within 1-2 weeks, rather than the current median of 22 days.

### **How to apply for sponsorship accreditation**

To qualify for Accredited Status, sponsors will have to demonstrate several characteristics in addition to the standard sponsorship requirements at the time of application.

Accredited status can be applied for by either submitting a new sponsorship application or applying for a variation of a current sponsorship agreement.

Sponsors can apply for accredited status by the same methods as applying to become a standard business sponsor that is by using eVisa or paper form 1196s.

If the employer does not meet the characteristics for accredited status, the application for standard business sponsorship will still proceed and be assessed in the usual way.

If a sponsor does not maintain these characteristics, Accredited Status can be revoked which means priority processing will be retracted. The validity length of the sponsorship cannot be changed, and will remain at six years.

### **Characteristics that must be met**

Sponsors who want to be approved for Accredited Status must meet **all** of the following characteristics:

- be a government agency, a publicly-listed company, or a private company, with a minimum of \$4 million turnover per year for the last three years
- have been an active subclass 457 visa sponsor for the past three years (with a break of no more than six months, not due to any sanction)

- have no adverse information known about them based on Department of Immigration and Citizenship and Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relation monitoring, including formal warnings and sanctions
- have had at least 30 primary subclass 457 visa holders granted in the previous 12 months
- have lodged a high level of decision-ready applications over the previous two years
- have a non-approval rate of less than three per cent for the previous three years
- have Australian workers comprising at least 75 per cent of their workforce in Australia and a commitment to maintain this level.

An accredited status sponsorship agreement is valid for **6 years**, rather than the usual 3 years.

Nevett Ford Immigration Lawyers can provide advice and assistance to your business in making application for Sponsorship Accreditation to streamline your recruitment of personnel from overseas.

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