MIGRATION

* Visas
* Conditions
* VEVO/ImmiAccount
* Permanent resident
* Australian Citizen

**P1** What type of visas are there in Australia?

**P2** There are different types of visas, for example, visitor, tourism, work, study, marriage, family, temporary protection, safe haven enterprise and bridging visas. Each visa has again different types of visas/subclasses as well. The type of visa that you apply for depends on which country you hold a passport with that Australia has an agreement with.

**P1** Who do I apply to for a visa or to update my visa?

**P2** You need to apply to the Australian Government’s Department of Home Affairs. You can check the details and conditions of your current visa on their website.

**P1** What do you mean by “conditions”?

**P2** Visas are issued with conditions. For example, some visas have the condition that while you are here in Australia, you cannot marry or enter into a defacto relationship.

**P1** So where do you check for your conditions?

**P2** The Department has a system called Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO).

**P1** Is VEVO the same as the ImmiAccount?

**P2** No the Department calls the ImmiAccount the front door to visa services. You need an ImmiAccount to access VEVO.

**P1** I have heard people talk about an Immicard. What is that?

**P2** An Immicard is issued as a way for the Australian government to identify a person. They are issued to people who do not have and cannot obtain a passport recognized by the Australian Government.

**P1** What happens if something changes, like we have a baby, or my partner dies?

**P2** You have to tell the Department of every change in case it affects your visa.

**P1** What if my visa is about to expire or has already expired but I want to stay?

**P2** If your visa has expired, the Government will see you as an illegal immigrant. You need to apply for a bridging visa. Otherwise, the Government can put you in detention and arrange for your deportation. It is much better to keep an eye on your visa conditions, including the expiry dates and act before your visa expires.

If you visa is about to expire, you can apply for another visa.

**P1** Is there anyway that I can stay without having to keep checking on my visa expiry?

**P2** Yes, you can apply to become a permanent resident.

**P1** How can I become a permanent resident?

**P2** You can apply for a permanent resident visa.

P1 What are the benefits of permanent resident visa?

P2 It doesn’t expire, you can apply for bank loans, you can work and study here, you can apply for Medicare, you can apply to be a citizen.

**P1** Wow that sounds like you can do anything if you are a permanent resident.

**P2** It is better than a temporary visa for sure but there are limits. You can’t have an Australian passport, you can’t vote, you can’t join the defence force, you don’t have an automatic right of entry back into Australia if you travel overseas.

**P1** You mean permanent residents cannot just go on overseas holidays or to see family and come back to Australia automatically?

**P2** That’s right. When you first become a permanent resident, you get a 5- year travel facility, which means you can leave and re-enter Australia as many times as you like in the 5 years but when that expires, if you want to come back to Australia, you need to have a Resident Return Visa or become an Australian citizen.

**P1** Ok then, how do I become an Australian Citizen?

**P2** There are a few paths depending on your situation. For example, the path for permanent residents is different if you are 60 years old or older and different again if your parents were Australian but you were born overseas. You have to make sure you look at the right path for your situation.

**P1** What if I am a permanent resident and want to become an Australian Citizen?

**P2** To be eligible, you have to pass the residence criteria which is how long you have lived in Australia, how long you have been a permanent resident, how many days you have been away from Australia over a period of time.

You also have to be of good character which means that you will uphold and obey the rules of Australia and will uphold the Pledge.

**P1** What is the Pledge?

**P2** When you become an Australian Citizen, you take a vow where you pledge loyalty to Australia and its people, share the democratic beliefs, respect the rights and liberties, and uphold and obey the laws.

**P1** What do they mean when they consider a person with a good character?

**P2** They look at things like any criminal convictions, people you associate with, any court obligations you have in any country, any domestic violence complaints against you and whether you have been honest with all your dealings with the government, including all visa applications.

**P1** Is there also some test that I have to take?

**P2** Yes, the citizenship test. It is designed to show that you have

* a basic knowledge of the English language
* an understanding of what it means to become an Australian citizen
* an adequate knowledge of Australia and the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship
* an understanding and commitment to Australian values based on freedom, respect, and equality

You have to score 75% or more and answer all 5 questions on Australian values correctly.

**P1** How do I apply to become an Australian Citizen?

**P2** Through the Department of Home Affairs. There are 5 steps to check:

1. if you are eligible,
2. prepare your documents,
3. apply for the visa,
4. go to the appointment for an interview and
5. finally sit the citizenship test and then wait for the decision.