



Travel Exemptions – request for information response

Question:

I respectfully request under FOI the following information from the period of 25 March 2020 until the date of this request (25 April 2021):

(1) Data regarding the number of travellers determined to be exempt from outward travel restrictions and not required to apply for an individual exemption. To the extent this data can be disaggregated, I respectfully request that it be disaggregated by the categories of traveller exempt from travel restrictions outlined in paragraph 2 of the 'Outward Travel Restrictions Operation Directive' v7.

(2) Data regarding the number of travellers who have applied for an individual exemption to the outward travel restrictions. To the extent this data can be disaggregated, I respectfully request that it be disaggregated by the general basis for the exemption request (or by another similar categorisation adopted by DHA), as well as by the country of intended travel.

(3) Data regarding the number of travellers who have been approved for an individual exemption to the outward travel restrictions. To the extent this data can be disaggregated, I respectfully request that it be disaggregated by the general basis for the exemption request (or by another similar categorisation adopted by DHA), as well as by the country of intended travel.

Response:

(1) - Outbound travel exemption requests assessed by the Australian Border Force (ABF) travel exemptions processing team as not requiring an individual exemption to depart because they met an automatically exempt category: 1 August 2020 to 25 April 2021.

Automatically exempt category	Number
Ordinarily resident in country other than Australia	12,909
New Zealand citizen holding a Special Category (subclass 444) temporary visa	2,383
Temporary visa holders	911
Travelling on official Government business (including members of the Australian Defence Force)	402
Airline and maritime crew and associated safety workers*	248
Travel associated with essential work at offshore facilities	164
Total	17,017

Notes:

- i. 'Requests' refers to system transactions. An individual may submit more than one request.
- ii. Travellers who self-assess that they meet an automatically exempt category are not required to submit a travel exemption request to the ABF travel exemptions processing team ahead of departure. The data therefore excludes:
 - a. travellers who were automatically exempt from travel restrictions and did not submit a travel exemption request prior to departure.
 - b. Individuals travelling directly to New Zealand and who were only in Australia or New Zealand for the 14 days immediately before the travel date. These travellers can only be assessed as exempt from Australia's travel restrictions at the time of departure.
- iii. Processing of travel exemption requests moved to the Travel Exemptions Portal on 1 August 2020. The data above cannot be disaggregated prior to this date.
- iv. * includes a small number of individuals found to be engaged in the day to day conduct of outbound and inbound freight.

(2) a) Outbound travel restriction exemption requests received between 1 August 2020 and 25 April 2021, by reason for exemption selected by the applicant.

Reason for travel/exemption selected by the applicant	Requests received
Travelling overseas for at least three months	67,253
On compassionate and compelling grounds *	59,018
Not recorded **	25,966
Travel essential for the conduct of critical industries and business	25,339
Travelling on urgent and unavoidable personal business	24,491
Travelling to receive urgent medical treatment that is not available in Australia	2,803
Travel as part of the response to the COVID-19 outbreak	2,065
Travel in the national interest	1,856
Total	208,791

Notes:

- i. 'Requests' refers to system transactions. An individual may submit more than one request.
- ii. * On 19 May 2021 the name of this category was changed from 'Compassionate or Humanitarian grounds' to more accurately reflect program settings
- iii. ** Not recorded— no information available (for example where the client completed a different request form in error, or before the system captured this data).

(2) b) Outbound travel restriction exemption requests received between 1 August 2020 and 25 April 2021, by top 10 intended destination countries.

Intended destination country	Requests received
India	25,443
China	21,547
United Kingdom	15,703
United States of America	15,633
Pakistan	9,713
New Zealand	8,928
Singapore	6,281
Papua New Guinea	4,650
Indonesia	4,187
Canada	4,073
Other countries	92,633
Total	208,791

Notes:

- i. 'Requests' refers to system transactions. An individual may submit more than one request.
- ii. Processing of travel exemption requests moved to the Travel Exemptions Portal on 1 August 2020. Travel exemption data cannot be disaggregated by intended destination country prior to this date.

(3) a) Outbound travel exemptions APPROVED between 1 August 2020 and 25 April 2021, by discretionary category.

Discretionary category exemption approved under	Travel exemptions approved
Travelling overseas for a compelling reason for at least three months*	71,249
Compassionate and compelling grounds	28,391
Critical industries and business	14,000
Urgent and unavoidable personal business	4,797
Urgent medical treatment not available in Australia	669
National interest	529
Response to the COVID-19 outbreak	287
Total	119,922

Notes:

- i. 'Requests' refers to system transactions. An individual may submit more than one request.
- ii. Excludes persons found to meet an already exempt category, requests that did not contain sufficient information for consideration by a decision maker, withdrawn and refused requests.
- iii. Processing of travel exemption requests moved to the Travel Exemptions Portal on 1 August 2020. The data above cannot be disaggregated prior to this date.
- iv. * Prior to 30 September 2020, this category was included within "Urgent and unavoidable personal business". "For a compelling reason" was added on 8 January 2021.
- v. Received requests are categorised for processing by client-selected 'reason for travel/exemption'. Requests approved by a decision maker or the Commissioner are finalised according to a Discretionary Category most relevant to the circumstances of the assessed request. 'Reason for travel/exemption' statistics for received applications cannot be compared against Discretionary Category outcome statistics for finalised requests.

(3) b) Outbound travel exemptions APPROVED between 1 August 2020 and 25 April 2021, by intended destination country.

Intended destination country	Travel exemptions approved
China	12,793
India*	11,714
United Kingdom	10,703
United States of America	8,847
New Zealand	5,340
Pakistan	4,760
Singapore	3,656
Papua New Guinea	3,052
Canada	2,850
Indonesia	2,213
Other	53,994
Total	119,922

Notes:

- i. *'Requests' refers to system transactions. An individual may submit more than one request.*
- ii. *Excludes persons found to meet an already exempt category, requests that did not contain sufficient information for consideration by a decision maker, withdrawn and refused requests.*
- iii. *Processing of travel exemption requests moved to the Travel Exemptions Portal on 1 August 2020. The data above cannot be disaggregated prior to this date.*
- iv. *Unused exemptions to travel to India were revoked in early May 2021, following an announcement by the Prime Minister of Australia that expert health advice considers India a high-risk COVID-19 country*