



What is a District of Workforce Shortage?

What is the purpose of a District of Workforce Shortage?

A District of Workforce Shortage (DWS) is a geographical area of Australia in which the population's need for healthcare has not been met.

DWS is a key mechanism that the Australian Government uses to achieve an equitable distribution of medical services across Australia.

DWS only applies to medical jobs that provide services attracting Medicare rebates and is required for any overseas trained doctor (OTD) that is subject to Section 19AB of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* (otherwise known as the Ten Year Moratorium). This enables the OTD to access a Medicare Provider Number for billing purposes.

How is a District of Workforce Shortage determined?

District of Workforce Shortage is determined by the Commonwealth Department of Health (DOH) using both Australian Bureau of Statistics population data and Medicare Australia's billing data.

In general, a location is deemed to be a DWS if it falls below the national average for the provision of medical services of the type provided by the applicant (for example general practice). Population needs for health care are deemed to be unmet if a district has less access to medical services than the national average.

Search for District of Workforce Shortage locations

To check if a locality is a current DWS search the online database at the following website:

<http://www.doctorconnect.gov.au> > Search the Map > Enter town name > Tick DWS > Read and understand the user information > Search Map

Section 19AB Guidelines

The complete revised Section 19AB Guidelines are available online from the ComLaw website: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au>

Considerations for exemptions to Section 19AB

The limited allowances under 19AB guidelines include provisions for:

- Services provided at Commonwealth funded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care organisations;
- A spouse of a person who has been granted a General Skilled Migration Visa and is currently employed in, volunteers in or is undertaking a training placement in that occupation in a location not otherwise considered a District of Workforce Shortage;
- Locum services for a period of not more than six months; or
- After-hours professional services at the service location.

Whilst all care has been taken in preparing this document, this information is a guide only and subject to change without notice.

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In addition to these limited considerations, the Delegate of the Minister for Health may also take into account:

- Whether the applicant's registration as a medical practitioner is subject to any conditions;
- Where the applicant is the holder of an Australian visa, whether the visa entitles the applicant to work as a medical practitioner or undertake clinical training in medicine;
- Whether the applicant has entered into, or has commenced negotiations to enter into, a contract of service or contract for services under which he or she will provide professional services at the service location;
- Whether professional services were rendered at the service location within the last 12 months by another person to whom an exemption in respect of that location applied and whose provider number in respect of that location has been cancelled by the Chief Executive Medicare; and
- Any other matters the Minister considers relevant.

More information

Further information and requests for an exemption under Section 19AB of the Health Insurance Act can be made by contacting:

The Director
Workforce Regulation Section – MDP 1054
Department of Health
GPO Box 9848
Canberra ACT 2601

Fax: 02 6389 7900

Email: 19AB@health.gov.au

Website: www.doctorconnect.gov.au

See also

Practice Assist Fact Sheets:

- What is an Area of Need?
- Section 19AB of the Health Insurance Act 1973

Practice Assist Templates:

- Position Description – General Practitioner

Practice Assist Check List:

- GP Start-up Pack