

HOW CAN FILIPINO NURSES WORK IN AUSTRALIA?

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“Registered Nurse” is an occupation in demand in Australia. But why go to Australia instead of the USA or UK, when the exchange rate of the Australian dollar to the Philippine peso is less?

For a start, the processing time for a working visa to Australia for one year up to four years could be as short as *six week* compared to the long processing period of a working visa to the USA and the UK. If you are under 45 years old and have worked as registered nurse for a year before application for permanent residency, visa grant is generally achievable within 12 months. The return airfare from Manila to Sydney is cheaper than to the USA or the UK and is a bonus.

More importantly, you are allowed to include your entire family (spouse and dependent children below 25 years old) in your permanent resident visa. There is even the possibility of bringing your widowed parent and single aunt or uncle who have lived with you and are dependent on you as part of your family. Once you get your permanent resident visa, you then open the doors to the migration of your brothers, sisters, nephew, nieces and other relatives.

Passing the PRC Board Examinations for registered nurses in the Philippines is just the first step towards becoming a registered nurse in Australia.

If you are a registered nurse in the Philippines but not registered in the UK, USA, or New Zealand, you will need to first register in a State or Territory in Australia before you can apply for a working visa or permanent resident visa. The nursing registration bodies of the six states (New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania) and two territories (Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory (ACT)) vary in their registration process, costs and requirements.

As a general rule, Philippine educated nurses are required to pass an English Test, then the nursing competency test.

The English proficiency which is a mandatory requirement in Australian skilled migration is not the same as the pre-nursing registration English proficiency requirement. While a passmark of 5 or 6 in the IELTS *general* module meets the skilled migration requirement, a higher passmark in the IELTS *academic* module is required for the latter.

For the English test, you must either obtain an overall passmark of 7 in the International English Language Testing System Academic module (IELTS) or Level B pass in the Occupational English Test (OET).

After passing the English test, you will be required to pass a nursing competency test (theoretical and clinical) before getting registered as nurse in Australia.

In one State, the nursing test consists of a two hour theoretical test which can be held in Manila by arrangement plus a four week clinical test which must be held in Australia. In another State the nursing test consists of seven weeks theoretical and clinical assessment in Australia. Yet some States require three, six months or even a year of studies before registration. For this reason, it is wiser to get professional assistance in obtaining your initial registration in Australia than doing it on our own. It will be easy to cross register in the State of your choice later.

In regard to visas, generally, you can be granted a non-working visa to undertake the nursing competency test in Australia. If you pass the test, you will be eligible for nursing registration. If you fail the nursing test, your alternative is to apply for student visa to study for one year which will allow you to work for 20 hours per week. After completing the course requirements, you will be eligible for nursing registration in Australia. Once registered as nurse in any state or territory of Australia, your non-working visa or student visa can usually be converted to a working visa for one year up to four years. It is possible to do the change in Australia as soon as we find a qualified sponsoring employer for you.

In regard to pay, your salary usually starts from A\$37,700 per year and increases depending on your work experience and expertise. Most of those who have five years experience start from A\$46,000.00 per year. Those with eight years of experience can earn as high a A\$90,000.00 to A\$100,000.00 per year with overtime pay.

If you are working as registered nurse in the UK, USA, or New Zealand, there is a possibility that your occupation as registered nurse will be recognised in Australia without your having to pass the English and nursing competency test. If you get registered while your contract to work in UK, USA, or New Zealand is current, you can apply for permanent residence in Australia. Processing time is usually 12 months. If your visa is approved after your contract expires in UK, USA, or New Zealand, you could go to live in Australia with your entire family. If your permanent resident visa is approved before your contract expires, then all you need to do is enter Australia to validate your visa. You can leave Australia the next day or so and return to the UK, USA, or New Zealand to complete your contract, provided you return to live in Australia within 5 years.

Obtaining your nursing degree in Australia is an option for those who are single and can show funds of say A\$55,000 to A\$60,000. More funds are required for those who are married with children. An Australian Bachelor in Nursing Degree is only for a period of three years compared to the five year course in the Philippines. No Board examination is required before a nursing graduate can become a registered nurse in Australia. After the completion of the course, provided you have studied within Australia for at least two years full time, you can apply for permanent residence and can be reasonably assured of success within months.

However, to gain entry to the Bachelor in Nursing Degree course, the completion of two years College towards a bachelors degree equivalent to year 11 and year 12 in Australia is usually required.

We assist in enrolment and in obtaining student visas, in addition to finding a sponsoring employer, managing applications for working visas and permanent resident visas for registered nurses. We also assist skilled workers and other professionals.

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