

LPA Guide: COVID-19 Travel Exemption Requests



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Overview

This Guide provides our Members with information on how to apply for an exemption to travel to Australia while border and travel restrictions are in place during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Who needs a Travel Exemption?

Anyone wishing to enter Australia to work in the entertainment industry on film, television or live productions as a performer, musician, creative (e.g. Director, Choreographer, Writer) or production/support staff will:

- need to apply for an exemption from the Australian Border Force Commissioner (**Commissioner**); and
- must undertake a mandatory 14-day quarantine at designated facilities (for example, a hotel) in their port of arrival. The charge for hotel quarantine is currently \$2,500-\$3,000 for one person in a room, which must be paid by the employer/producer.

The Commissioner may consider an exemption from travel restrictions on a number of grounds. International performers, creatives and crew can apply for a Travel Exemption based on the requirement for people with **critical skills** to perform work in Australia.

What does it cost?

There is no cost for submitting a request for a Travel Exemption.

Does it cover family members?

Each accompanying family member must be included in the application for requesting a Travel Exemption. However, at this time **it is unlikely that family members will be approved to travel to Australia.**

Can multiple people be included in the same application for requesting a Travel Exemption?

Yes. People travelling for the same purpose must be included in the same application for requesting a Travel Exemption.

Group Travel Exemptions

Applications for **8 or more people travelling for the same production, event, or purpose** are considered to be **Group Travel Exemptions**.

There are additional requirements, and longer timeframes for **Group Travel Exemption** applications which are set out below.

Individual Travel Exemptions

Applications for **7 or less people** are considered **Individual Travel Exemptions**.

Does a person need to hold a Visa before a requesting a Travel Exemption?

No. However, a person making a request for a Travel Exemption for a **group of 8 or more people must apply for the appropriate visa** before making the request for a Travel Exemption.

Application process

How do I apply for a Travel Exemption?

All requests for Travel Exemptions are made to the Commissioner and lodged through an [online form](#) on the Department of Home Affairs (**Department**) website.

You will need to:

1. Gather all relevant documentation (**see list below**)
2. Register for an account to make requests for Travel Exemptions on the Department website (see appendix 4 for a [step-by-step guide](#))
3. Input all relevant information in relation to your application/s into the online form
4. Submit your application
5. Send all relevant documentation to LPA (**see list below**).

LPA will then review your application and correspond with the appropriate government department on your behalf if needed.

Timeframes

How long does it take for the Department to process an application?

Please Note: Members applying for Travel Exemptions for **groups of 8 or more** must submit an application for the Temporary Activity Visa (subclass 408) Entertainment Activities **before, or at the same time** as applying as applying for the Travel Exemption.

Groups and Individual Travel Exemption Applications

In order to receive the Travel Exemption and visa in time to arrange travel, LPA recommends that you:

- Apply for the 408 visa **8-12 weeks prior to arrival**
- Apply for the Travel Exemption **8 weeks prior to arrival**

Applications for a Travel Exemption can be submitted at least **2 weeks, but no more than 2 months**, before planned travel. However, if an application is submitted 2 weeks prior to departure Members may not receive approval on time, or have difficulty booking flights.

Applications for **Individual Travel Exemptions** are expected to be processed **within 7 days**.

Applications for **Group Travel Exemptions** are expected to be processed **within 2 weeks**.

The Department has indicated that for Temporary Activity Visa (subclass 408) Entertainment Activities it is able to process:

- 75% of applications within **13 days**; and
- 90% of applications within in **37 days**.

What do I need to complete the application?

What do I need to supply?

1. Traveller Details:

- name;
- date of birth;
- passport number (including a scanned copy of the passport);
- proposed residential address in Australia; and
- phone number in Australia.

2. Reasons for travel

- why the request should be considered by the Commissioner for a Travel Exemption. This is a short paragraph that is included in the online application form (see step 5 on page 12 of the application process below for an example).

3. Accompanying evidence

- **A letter of support from an Australian Government or state or territory government authority** advising why the travel is critical at this time. **If you do not have a letter from an Australian Government or a state or territory government authority your request for a travel exemption will not be granted.** The letter should be addressed to the Commissioner, Australian Border Force, Department of Home Affairs.
- **Approval for “above cap” quarantine places from the relevant state or territory government** **Currently the only state that can allocate an “above cap” quarantine place is New South Wales.** Applicants must obtain a letter or email from the Create NSW, stating that all applicants have an approved “above cap” place in quarantine in NSW. Such approval may be granted by the health department or police. **If you do not have an approved “above cap” place in quarantine in NSW your request for a travel exemption may still be granted for Individual Travel Exemptions. However, recent reductions in permitted arrivals to Australia mean that travel exemption holders may not be able to secure a flight to Australia or may be the most likely travellers to have their flight cancelled.**

Please note: If the applicant/s arrive in a state in which they will not work, an additional support letter from a Minister from the relevant state or territory in which they will perform work may be required. This will be at the discretion of the state in which the applicant arrives.

LPA can assist Members with contacts in the relevant person in order to obtain the above accompanying evidence.

4. Supporting Statement

A [letter from the Australian Producer or Company](#) of the production/event should include the following information:

- why the production/event requires the applicant/s to travel to Australia;
- why the travel and the work is necessary at a certain time;
- the importance of the applicant's critical skills for the production/event, (i.e. skills they possess);
- how the applicant/s entry to Australia will enable other Australians to be employed, the number of Australians employed, and the length of the employment; and
- the economic benefit to the Australian economy (including the estimated monetary value of that benefit), and the estimated turnover of the production/event.

5. Letter of support from the Employer

A [letter of support on Company's letterhead](#) (for each applicant) should set out:

- how the applicant meets the critical skills grounds for an exemption;
- the applicant's specific skills; and
- why the role or position must be undertaken by the applicant specifically.

6. COVID Safe Plan for the production

A COVID Safe Plan must be developed for the relevant production/event and submitted with the request for the Travel Exemption. The COVID Safe plan should be registered or submitted to the State or Territory in which the production will take place.

Each jurisdiction has different requirements for preparing a COVID-19 Safety Plan. LPA has provided [guidance about developing a COVID Safe Plan](#).

7. Commonwealth Statutory Declaration

The [Commonwealth Statutory Declaration](#) should be signed by the Employer/Producer and set out a brief statement which includes:

- the names and position of the applicant/s with critical skills;
- the reason for those people to travel to Australia;
- the number of Australians likely to be employed by the production/event;
- the employment period for Australians working on the production; and
- the economic benefit to the Australian economy.

Further information

For more information or queries, please contact:

Shay Minster,

Workplace Relations Advisor

☎ 03 8614 2006 | ✉ Immigration@liveperformance.com.au

Appendix 1 – Check list for Travel Exemption Requests

Step 1: Required documentation

Gather the following documents:

- A clear scan of each Applicant's passport photo page.
- A support letter from an Australian Government or state or territory government authority advising why the travel is critical (if possible).
- A letter or email from the relevant State or Territory Government Department approving above cap quarantine places.
- A supporting statement on my organisation's letterhead setting out the reason and business case for the Travel Exemption based on the Applicant's critical skills and benefit to Australia.
- A support letter for each Applicant on my organisation's letterhead.
- The COVID Safe plan for the production.
- A Commonwealth Statutory Declaration setting out that the applicants have critical skills.

Step 2: Register an account

- I have registered for an account to make requests for Travel Exemptions on the Department's [online form](#).
- I have received an acknowledgement email from the Department, and have confirmed my email address.

Step 3: Log into your account and complete the online application form

- I have logged into my account.
- I have completed the online form.
- I have attached the required supporting documents.
- I have submitted the application.

Step 5: Acknowledgement of lodgement

- I have received an email confirming lodgement of the application/s with the Department of Home Affairs.
- I will now complete my 408 visa application.

Step 6: Travel Exemption approval/refusal

- I have received the approved Travel Exemptions.

Appendix 2 – Supporting Statement template/example

[INSERT COMPANY LETTERHEAD]

[DATE]

The Commissioner
Australian Border Force
Department of Home Affairs

Dear Commissioner,

Letter of Support [insert name of production/event]

This application and letter is to request a travel exemption for the following people in order to render their critical skills and services in order to work on the [insert name of production/event] in Australia;

- [insert name][insert position]
- [insert name][insert position]

[insert paragraph which set outs the schedule as relevant for auditions, rehearsal and production dates. You may include: whether the production or auditions for the production were postponed or canceled, or the production was shut down by government directions due to COVID-19].

[insert information about what must be done. For example, casting must be complete by x date, so that rehearsals or set construction can commence and be completed by x date].

[insert brief background of the production. For example, there may be multiple productions around the world, the production may have premiered to success on Broadway].

The Australian production of [insert name of show] will directly employ [insert number] of Australians. [insert name of Production] is scheduled to play in Australia from [insert date] to [insert date] generating employment opportunities in the theatre, construction, hospitality and tourism industries. In addition, there are [insert number] personnel employed in the venue for any given performance.

The employment period for Australians working on this production will be until at least [insert date]. This will greatly assist the reopening of the live performance industry in Australia following the shut down of the industry due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Australian Production of [insert name of show] will have an estimated turnover of [\$insert amount] and an additional benefit to the Australian economy of between [\$insert amount] and [\$insert amount].

The skills and services of [insert names of visa applicants eg Ms Smith, Mr Smith and Mr Jones] are critical to the production of [insert name of Production] in Australia. If the aforementioned personnel cannot attend [insert reason for travel; eg: final round auditions] from [insert date] to [insert date], we will be unable to produce [insert name of Production] in Australia. We have attached individual letters of support for each person in the application to exemplify their importance, as well as a support letter from [insert government agency or business].

We trust that your office is supportive in the issuing of these travel exemptions and will allow us to apply for their visas to enable the opening of [insert name of Production] in Australia.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

[Position/Title]

[Organisation]

Appendix 3 – Letter of Support from Employer – template/example

[INSERT COMPANY LETTERHEAD]

[DATE]

The Commissioner
Australian Border Force
Department of Home Affairs

Dear Commissioner,

Letter of Support: [insert name applicant name], [insert position], [insert name of production/event]

This letter is to request a travel exemption for [insert applicant name] in order to render their critical skills and services in order to work on the [insert name of production/event] in Australia.

[insert applicant name] is the [insert position] of [insert name of production/event] which has [insert information which sets out the schedule as relevant such as for auditions, rehearsal], requiring [him/her] to be present in Australia from [insert date] to quarantine for a 14-day period.

[You may include: whether the production or auditions for the production were postponed or canceled, or the production was shut down by government directions due to COVID-19]. The opening of the production in [insert city] is [the first season of a national tour] scheduled to play in Australia until [insert date].

[insert paragraph which sets out why it is important for this particular person in this particular role to come to Australia. Set out the specific skills of the person; why the role or position must be undertaken by the applicant in particular. The more specific this reason is, the better the application will be. For example a sound designer might be required due to the “dynamic and complex” score, has worked on the production for a number of years, is an essential link between the music director, choreographer and director etc.]

[The director may be required because they directed the show on Broadway etc, has been in the position for a number of years, is indispensable for reasons such as – auditioning and developing new cast. Only he/she has the knowledge of the intricate staging of the show and this cannot be matched by anyone in Australia. Only he/she has the understanding of what is required for each cast member to be able to perform the role to a worldwide standard and deliver a production in Australia that audiences for around the world expect from [insert name of production]. His/her being in the room will ensure the actors cast will have the necessary skills to ensure quality performances.]

[Without that person, the production would be impossible to achieve artistically or safely, or the person is integral to the production as a whole. State why this is the case and relate the example to your production specifically.]

Without [insert applicant name], we are at risk of cancelling the [production/event] and our [Australian tour /applicable city/performance] as we have no alternative in being able to [insert role of applicant e.g. choreograph/direct/cast] the [musical/play/concert/production] in order to stage it. [Insert name of production] is a major [concert/play/commercial theatre production] scheduled to open in Australia in [insert year], and is significant in assisting the reopening of the live performance industry in Australia following the COVID-19 shutdown.

We trust that your office is supportive in issuing [insert traveller name] a travel exemption which allows us to apply for [his/her] visa to enable the opening of [insert name of Production] in Australia.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

[Position/Title]

[Organisation]

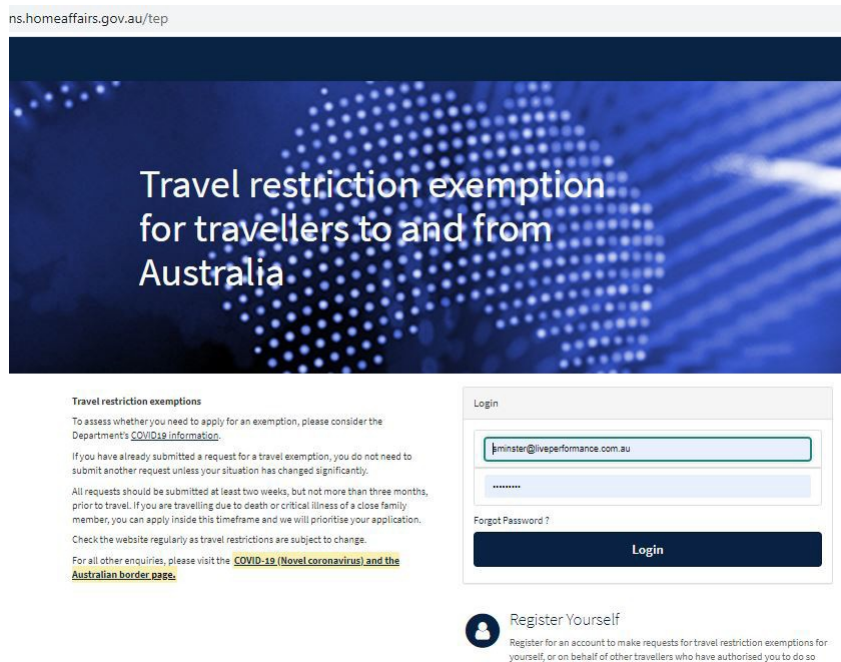
Appendix 4 – Step-by-step guide for Travel Exemption Requests

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STEP 1: Register with the Department of Home Affairs

Register an account to make requests for travel restriction exemptions for yourself or on behalf of other travellers. You can register your account on the [Department website](#) by clicking on “**Register Yourself**”

ns.homeaffairs.gov.au/tep



Travel restriction exemptions

To assess whether you need to apply for an exemption, please consider the Department's [COVID-19 information](#).

If you have already submitted a request for a travel exemption, you do not need to submit another request unless your situation has changed significantly.

All requests should be submitted at least two weeks, but not more than three months, prior to travel. If you are travelling due to death or critical illness of a close family member, you can apply inside this timeframe and we will prioritise your application.

Check the website regularly as travel restrictions are subject to change.

For all other enquiries, please visit the [COVID-19 \(Novel coronavirus\) and the Australian border page](#).

Login

[Forgot Password ?](#)

Login

Register Yourself

Register for an account to make requests for travel restriction exemptions for yourself, or on behalf of other travellers who have authorised you to do so

STEP 2: Create a new application

To start each new request:

1. Login to your account
2. Click on “**Submit new request**”

← → ↻ [travel-exemptions.homeaffairs.gov.au/tep](#) ☆ S

Australian Government
Department of Home Affairs

Australian BORDER FORCE

Submit new request

☰ Submitted Requests



All > Opened by is Shay Minster

No records in Travel Exemption Case using that filter

Give feedback

STEP 3: Enquiry type

On this page, select “I have a critical skill” as the Enquiry Type.



COVID-19 request to travel form

You can travel from New Zealand to Australia without needing a travel exemption, if:

- you have been in New Zealand for 14 days or more prior to travel; and
- you are arriving by air.

For more information, see [New Zealand safe travel zone](#).

Use this form to request an exemption from travel restrictions on arrivals to or departures from Australia due to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Information about categories of persons who are exempt from Australia's travel restrictions – or in what circumstances an individual may request an exemption – is available at **[COVID-19 and the Australian border](#)**

Travel restrictions and travel exemptions policies are subject to change and reviewed regularly. For the most up-to-date information please visit **[COVID-19 and the Australian border](#)**.

Enquiry Type

Please select the most appropriate reason for your travel exemption request

I want to leave Australia, and:

I am an Australian citizen or permanent resident and I need to depart Australia

I need an exemption to travel to Australia, and:

I am an Australian citizen

I am a permanent resident of Australia

I plan to transit Australia for less than 72 hours

I am a New Zealand citizen usually resident in Australia and/or their immediate family members (spouse, de facto partners, dependent child or legal guardian)

I am an immediate family member (spouse, de facto partners, dependent child or legal guardian) of an Australian citizen or permanent resident

I have a compassionate and compelling need to travel urgently (including a vessel seeking safe haven)

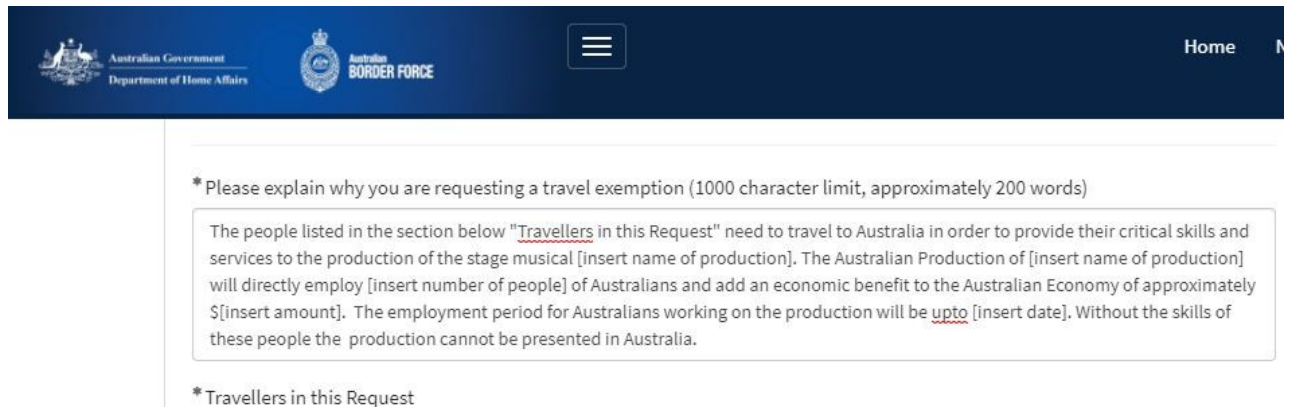
I need urgent medical treatment/medical evacuation

I have a critical skill

STEP 4: Reason to travel and list of all Travellers

On this page, you are required to enter a brief statement about the why the Applicant/s, need to travel to Australia now in the box titled **“Please explain why you need to travel to Australia now”**.

LPA has added a template for you to complete below. Your support letters will be attached at the end of the application and should set out your reasons for travel in more detail.



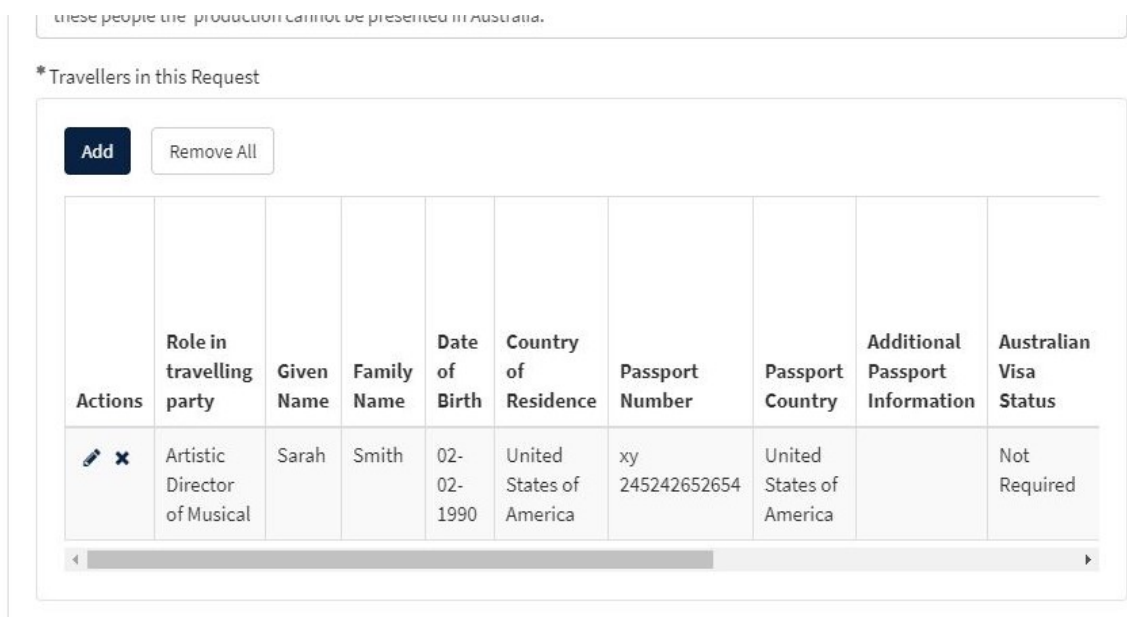
*Please explain why you are requesting a travel exemption (1000 character limit, approximately 200 words)

The people listed in the section below "Travellers in this Request" need to travel to Australia in order to provide their critical skills and services to the production of the stage musical [insert name of production]. The Australian Production of [insert name of production] will directly employ [insert number of people] of Australians and add an economic benefit to the Australian Economy of approximately \$[insert amount]. The employment period for Australians working on the production will be upto [insert date]. Without the skills of these people the production cannot be presented in Australia.

*Travellers in this Request

You will also need to:



- Add in the details for all Applicants in the section **“Travellers in the request”** by selecting **“Add”**. A drop box will appear requesting the information set out below.



these people the production cannot be presented in Australia.

*Travellers in this Request

Add Remove All

Actions	Role in travelling party	Given Name	Family Name	Date of Birth	Country of Residence	Passport Number	Passport Country	Additional Passport Information	Australian Visa Status
 	Artistic Director of Musical	Sarah	Smith	02-02-1990	United States of America	xy 245242652654	United States of America		Not Required

- To complete the above section you will need:
 1. Role of the Applicant
 2. Name of the Applicant
 3. DOB
 4. Country of residence
 5. Passport number and country of issue
 6. Visa Status (either 'not required'; 'visa holder' or 'visa applied'):
 - If you **do not have a visa, or have not yet applied for a visa**, under your Visa Status:
 - select **"Not required"**
 - select **"Critical skill/sector"** from the drop box under the question **"Why is a visa not required?"**
 7. select the appropriate job title/profession that applies from the dropbox under **"ANZSCO Code for Critical Skill"**

STEP 5: Travel Details, Contact Details and Employer Details in Australia

Contact Details in Australia

This section requires you to fill in the Applicant's intended travel details, including:

- select the **"Intended Travel Date"** if a the Application is for a group insert the earliest travel date;
- choose the country the Applicant/s are currently in, at the time you are making the request, from the drop box under **"Current Location"**; and
- select all the countries the Applicant/s has been to within the last 14 days from the drop box, **"List the countries you have been in the last 14 days"**.

Contact Details in Australia

This section requires you to fill in the Applicant's contact details for when they are in Australia, including:



- address in Australia (can be the business address);
- phone number; and
- email address

Employer Details in Australia

This section requires you to fill in the Employer's details for when they are in Australia, including:


- for the ANZSIC Code: select **"R - Arts and recreation services"**;
- Name of Employer;
- Employer ABN
- for the **"Industry Category"**, select **"Delivering services critical to Australia's economic recovery"**.

You must ensure this data is correct, so that the exemption matches the information in the Applicant's Visa application.



Travel Details

* Intended Travel Date (if making a request on behalf of a group, please enter earliest travel date)

* Current Location 

* List all countries travellers in this request have been in the last 14 days

Contact details in Australia

* Address in Australia

* Suburb

* State

* Post Code

* Contact Phone Number

* Contact Email Address

Employer Details

* ANZSIC Code

* Employer in Australia

* Employer ABN

* Industry category

STEP 6: Supporting documentation

Attach Supporting Documents

Attach all supporting documents including:

- Each Applicant's passport;
- Supporting Statement;
- Letters of Support for each Applicant;
- Accompanying evidence
 1. letter of support for the production/event from a government agency;
 2. letter approving "above cap" quarantine arrangements from the appropriate state or territory police or health department
- COVID Safe Plan; and
- Commonwealth Statutory Declaration.

When you have attached the supporting documents click "**submit**" to complete your application.

The screenshot shows the application form interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Australian Government and Australian Border Force logos, and links for Home, Notifications, Get Help, and Draft Requests. Below the navigation bar, the form is divided into several sections:

- Contact Email Address:** A text input field containing "sminster@liveperformance.com.au".
- Employer Details:**
 - * ANZSIC Code:** A dropdown menu with "R - Arts and recreation services" selected.
 - * Employer in Australia:** An empty text input field.
 - * Employer ABN:** An empty text input field.
 - * Industry category:** A dropdown menu with "Delivering services in sectors critical to Australia's economic recovery" selected.
- Supporting Documents:**
 - A text area containing instructions: "Every request for a travel exemption should be supported by relevant and appropriate documentary evidence. All documents must be in English. If you attach photographs they should only be of documents that support your request. Other photos should not be attached and will not be considered. Please do not use offensive or threatening language or attach offensive or threatening images (including images of dead bodies) to your application. Applications which include such material may not be processed. Inclusion of offensive or threatening language or material may be referred to the Australian Federal Police, relevant international police forces, and/or state or territory police forces for investigation and possible prosecution. You may include attachments up to 15 MB in total. Accepted file types are bmp, jpg, jpeg, png, gif, csv, xls, xlsx, doc, docx and pdf."
 - At the bottom right of this section is a paperclip icon and the text "* Add attachments".
- Right-hand sidebar:**
 - A "Save as a Draft" button with a document icon.
 - A prominent "Submit" button, which is circled in red.
 - A "Required information" section with several buttons: "Intended Travel Date (if making a request)", "Current Location", "List all countries travellers in this request", "Address in Australia" (with a "Suburb" sub-button), "State" and "Post Code", "Contact Phone Number", "Employer in Australia", and "Employer ABN".

STEP 7: Confirmation of receipt of application for Travel Exemption

When your request has been submitted, you will receive confirmation and a reference number. You should be able to track the status of your application using the reference number.

You should also receive an email from the Department of Home Affairs confirming receipt of your application.



Thank you for your request

We have received your request for an exemption from Australia's current travel restrictions. Your reference number is [REDACTED]

We are receiving a high volume of requests for exemptions. We are making every effort to respond within a reasonable timeframe, and appreciate your patience.

You may track that status of your request, update your details or provide additional documents through our online portal.

For further information on Australia's travel restrictions, please refer to our website at: <https://covid19.homeaffairs.gov.au/>

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