

IHA POLICY AND GUIDELINES ON IMPORT PLAYERS AND IIHF TRANSFER APPROVALS

This document has been produced as a guide for members of the Ice Hockey Australia on the subject of import players and international transfers. It is a summary of information contained in the IIHF Transfer Regulations, IHA Regulations, advice from the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA), and resultant policies adopted by IHA. This guide is not intended to be a complete reference on the subject.

Who is an Import Player?

IHA defines an import player as a non-Australian born player who does not hold Australian citizenship, or permanent residency status, but has a valid entry Visa to Australia, as approved by DIMIA.

Individuals claiming diplomatic status (of accredited diplomatic staff) will be deemed as “local” status for participation in IHA competitions.

What is an ITC?

An IIHF ITC is an International Transfer Card which is purchased from the IIHF for the purposes of providing an approval process for the transfer of players between countries. The ITC is a numbered and registered document which must be signed by the losing and gaining national federations as well as the IIHF before transfer approval is valid. An ITC is required for players 18 years and over and is obtained from the gaining national federation. ITC for players wishing to play in Australia are purchased from the IHA Secretary (currently \$388 per card). IHA does not charge any service fees associated with the ITC, but some countries do charge a processing fee.

What is a Letter of Approval?

An IIHF Letter of Approval serves the same purpose as an ITC but is a simple letter format used for players under 18 years of age. There is no cost associated with Letters of Approval. As with an ITC, the Letter is signed by the losing and gaining national federations and the IIHF. When approved by the IIHF, the Letter is given a registered number by the IIHF for future reference. Letters of Approval are raised through the gaining national federation, and in Australia are raised through the IHA Secretary.

A player who was under 18 years of age when they obtained an unlimited transfer under a Letter of Approval does not need to obtain an ITC upon reaching their 18th birthday. At this point the Letter of Approval substitutes for an ITC. An ITC would be required however, if the player turned 18 and only had a limited transfer on a Letter of Approval.

Limited and Unlimited Transfers

Transfer approvals must be for a defined period and this is specified on the ITC/Letter of Approval. Transfers are designated as either “Limited” or “Unlimited”.

- a. **Limited Transfer.** A Limited transfer is a temporary transfer for a specified period, usually the next season, or for a period up to 12 months. At the completion of the transfer period the player automatically reverts to the control of their original national federation without the requirement for an additional transfer approval.
- b. **Unlimited Transfers.** An Unlimited transfer is a permanent transfer to another national federation. If a player wished to move again, a further transfer approval is required, even if the player is returning to their country of birth or citizenship.

Who Requires an IIHF Transfer Approval?

IIHF Regulations state that any player moving from one country to another requires a transfer approval. This approval is required irrespective of whether or not the individual played hockey in their country of birth.

All non-Australian born players require transfer approval from the IIHF to be eligible to play in Australia. The gaining of Australian citizenship or permanent residency, does not exempt the requirement for an ITC or Letter of Approval. Australian citizens returning to Australia after having transferred to another country on an Unlimited (permanent) transfer, will require a transfer approval to play in Australia.

The only exception to the requirement for a transfer approval is where the player was under 10 years of age when they migrated to Australia with their parents. No transfer approval is required.

IHA Policy

Noting the IIHF policy is primarily to control the movement of elite players, IHA has adopted a policy that for players 18 years of age and over, an ITC will only be required if the player wishes to play in representative teams in IHA national competitions, in an Australian national team, or in the AIHL. If the player is playing in house league competitions IHA will not insist on an ITC. In this case however, State Associations are to obtain a letter of clearance from the player's old club/association stating that the player is of good character and standing and not currently serving a suspension.

For players under 18 years of age who were not born in Australia or born Australian citizens, IHA requires that they obtain a formal Letter of Approval. This requirement is imposed for the benefit of the player, to prevent future eligibility problems should the player wish to represent Australia.

Transition Arrangements

Due to the number of overseas born players that presently have Australian citizenship or permanent residency, the IHA has adopted a limited transition arrangement for individuals who are 18 years of age and over.

Players who are 18 years of age and over and were born overseas, do not require an ITC to play in the AIHL or national championships if they hold Australian citizenship or permanent residency status as at 1 January 2002. These players will still require an ITC if they wish to represent Australia. As from 1 January 2002 the ITC/Letter of Approval requirements as per IHA policy will apply for all individuals arriving in Australia.

Exhibition Games and Tryouts

An ITC/Letter of Approval is not required for imports who are in Australia solely for the purpose of playing in an IHA sanctioned exhibition game. In this case they would be acknowledged as a visiting foreign player taking part in an exhibition game.

Similarly, an ITC/Letter of Approval is not required for overseas born players who have come to Australia, or are already living in Australia, while participating in tryouts for a team in Australia. Should such a player be selected as a result of those tryouts, the player will be required to obtain an ITC or Letter of Approval before playing, as per the normal IHA policy. Note that overseas born players trying out for Australian national teams will need to have a valid unlimited ITC/Letter of Approval (see *Eligibility to Play for Australia*).

Procedure for Obtaining an ITC/Letter of Approval

Players requiring an ITC or Letter of Approval are to complete an *IHA Application for Transfer Approval* form and forward it to the IHA Secretary. A copy of the *IHA Application for Transfer Approval* is attached to this guide.

a. ITC

- Where the request is for an ITC the application is to be accompanied by a cheque/money order for the appropriate purchase price (as advised by the IHA Secretary).
- On receipt of the application and payment, the IHA Secretary will forward the ITC to the player for completion and player signature. The ITC is then returned to the IHA Secretary who will sign it and onforward it to the losing national federation. The losing federation will sign the ITC and forward it to the IIHF for approval and registering.
- A copy of the approved ITC is returned to IHA, who will in turn forward a copy of the card to the player.
- Should an ITC not be approved, the IHA Secretary will advise the player on the implications of such an event and the actions that can be taken by the player.

b. Letters of Approval

- In the case of a Letter of Approval, the applicant is not required to sign the Letter and therefore it will be completed by the IHA Secretary based on the information provided in the Application for Transfer Approval.

- Once the Letter of Approval is completed by the IHA Secretary, the approval process is the same as outlined above for an ITC.

Players/Clubs should allow at least six weeks for the above process to be completed. In emergencies, the process can be quickened by approvals being sought via facsimile with the original hard copies following in the mail. An emergency is not an excuse for poor forward planning.

Visa Requirements

IHA has no interest in the type of visa with which a person has entered Australia. IHA's only concern is that all overseas players have a current valid visa and that they have a valid IIHF transfer approval.

The type of visa that an individual enters the country on is a matter for the individual and DIMIA, and perhaps the State Association where they are sponsoring the player under a Temporary Resident Visa.

DIMIA places no restrictions on individuals playing sport on any type of visa, except where an individual derives income for playing the sport, coaching or officiating. Where an individual coming into the country is to receive income from the sport, they will need to liaise with DIMIA on the appropriate type of visa. Income in this context does not include minor payments for games played.

Temporary Resident Visas. The main types of temporary resident visa that may be used by players coming into Australia are:

- a. **Sports Visa.** This is an occupation-based visa and is intended for sport people who have an established reputation in the sport. The club or association bringing the person into the country must sponsor that person. Remuneration for the sporting activity should be consistent with it being the person's full time occupation. The visa can be granted for up to two years but is usually one year (or a season).
- b. **Working Holiday Maker Visa.** This is a tourist visa that allows the visa holder to remain in Australia for 12 months from the date of arrival and to work in order to help support their stay. The visa holder is not permitted to work for any one employer for more than three months. To apply, a person must be between the ages of 18 and 30 and can only apply once in their lifetime. In addition., citizens of the following countries can only apply: UK, Japan, Ireland, Netherlands, Canada, Malta, Rep of Korea, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Hong Kong (**note the USA is not included in this list**)

The visa requirements for Australia are quite detailed. It is recommended that specific advice be sought from DIMIA or from their website at www.immi.gov.au

Where a State Association or a club intends sponsoring a person on a Sports Visa or Working Holiday Maker Visa, then the matter of sponsorship is a matter between the individual, the club/association, and DIMIA. IHA has no involvement in this process. On request by a State association, IHA may provide a letter of support to add to the application. This should only be necessary in exceptional circumstances. Clubs or associations that are considering the sponsorship of players should make sure they are aware of their sponsorship requirements and responsibilities as determined by DIMIA (again see www.immi.gov.au).

Insurance

All players and officials registered with the IHA (including import players) are covered under the IHA Sports Insurance policy for injury and professional indemnity cover.

It should be noted however, that sports insurance policies in Australia do not cover Medicare expenses (Government policy). In this regard sports insurance only covers non-Medicare items. As import players are not Australian citizens, they are not members of, nor covered by, Medicare.

To protect the interests of the individual and IHA, all import players and overseas players participating in exhibition games or tryouts, must hold current private health insurance while in Australia. The IHA Sports Insurance policy still covers the players for major injury, after the private health cover has been utilised.

Eligibility to Play for Australia

The only relationship that exists between the requirement for an ITC and citizenship is that it affects a player's eligibility to play for Australia. Under IIHF Rules, to be eligible to play for Australia in an IIHF Championship a player must be an Australian citizen, and must have held a valid unlimited ITC/Letter of Approval for at least two years prior to the date the Championship commences. The effective date of the ITC/Letter of Approval is the date it is signed and approved by the IIHF.

Transfer Procedure for Australian Players wishing to Play Overseas

Australian registered players who wish to play in another country are required to abide by the same IIHF International Transfer procedures as outlined above. The procedures largely remain the same but operate in reverse.

Players wishing to play in another country need to arrange their transfer approval through the club/association they will be joining overseas. The process is initiated in the gaining country and therefore IHA cannot initiate the transfer.

Before initiating the process, players should check with their new club/association as to the local rules that apply to international transfers. In certain instances (depending on the level of hockey that a player will be playing) the gaining club/association may not

insist on an ITC/Letter of Approval, but only require a letter of clearance from the old club/association.

If a formal transfer process is required, players 18 years of age or over will need to purchase an ITC through their new club/association. Similarly, if a player is under 18 years of age a Letter of Approval can be used and again this is arranged through the new club/association. The ITC or Letter of Approval will be raised by the new club/association and forwarded to their National Federation for action. The gaining National Federation will subsequently forward the ITC/Letter of Approval to IHA for IHA and subsequent IIHF approval.

Before submitting a request for a transfer to another country, players are advised to have a letter of clearance from their Australian club/association. This letter will need to accompany the transfer application.

Players are also advised to check on any administrative fees or charges that may be imposed by the gaining association or National Federation. These fees vary from country to country, with a number of countries not charging any fee at all.

Note that IHA does not charge the gaining country with an administrative fee for the transfer of Australian players to that country.

14. Name of previous club and Association:

15. Level of hockey played in previous country:
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16. Certifications held:
a. Coaching Level and country of issue
b. Officiating Level and country of issue
c. Other

17. Type of transfer requested:
a. Limited (state period of transfer)
b. Unlimited

.....
Player's Signature or Signature of
Parent/Guardian if under 18 years

.....
Date

Recommendation of State Association

Transfer of the above player is Recommended / Not Recommended

.....
Signature of State Official

.....
Date

.....
Official's Name and Position