

From: Immigration Advisers immigrationadvisers@mbie.govt.nz
Subject: INZ Update
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To:



Immigration New Zealand continues to focus on immediate priorities from the Government as we all adjust to COVID-19 Alert Level 4.

This email contains updates on:

- Border restrictions
- Exceptions to border measures;
- Health sector response;
- Epidemic notice process and
- Visa processing.

Border restrictions

You will be aware that the New Zealand Government has closed the border to almost all travellers as part of its response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The restrictions were maintained on the 31 March 2020 as per [Amendment Circular 2020-14](#).

Where flights are available, [the following people](#) and their immediate family who are travelling with them can still come to New Zealand:

- New Zealand citizens;
- Permanent residents; and
- Residents who have been in New Zealand as a resident (i.e. not someone travelling to New Zealand for the first time after being granted residence offshore).

Australian citizens and permanent residents who normally live in New Zealand can also return to New Zealand and can make a request to travel to New Zealand. This process will provide this group of people with certainty that they can travel to New Zealand rather than risk being denied boarding flights to New Zealand. Details of how to make a request can be found below.

Exceptions to border measures

There may be extremely limited circumstances where it is appropriate for a person who is not a New Zealand citizen, permanent resident or person returning to New Zealand as a resident to travel to New Zealand.

Exceptions are only in place for extreme circumstances where people have a critical purpose for travel to New Zealand.

A process has now been put in place for requests to be made for exceptions to the border closure for exceptional circumstances, including:

- Humanitarian reasons;
- Health and other essential workers;
- Citizens of Samoa and Tonga for essential travel to New Zealand; and
- Visitor, student or work visa holders who normally live in New Zealand, and who are the partner or dependent of a temporary work or student visa holder who is currently in New Zealand.

People who are outside New Zealand and think they may be eligible for an exception can make a request to us by using a request form available [on our website](#).

If their circumstances are considered exceptional and justify travel to New Zealand for a critical purpose, or because they are the family of and travelling with a New Zealander, they will be invited to apply for a visa, or to vary their existing visa to allow them to travel.

INZ will endeavour to respond to requests for exceptions within two working days, but the timeframe for a response may need to be extended depending on demand. Visa applications made following the granting of an invitation to apply for an exception will be prioritised.

This process will provide this group of people with certainty that they can travel to New Zealand rather than risk being denied boarding flights to New Zealand. Travellers can still attempt to check-in and be referred to a border officer to make an individual exception, though there is no certainty that a particular person will be approved under that process.

The immigration instructions are restricted temporary entry instructions, which means that in accordance with section 76 (2) of the Immigration Act 2009 visas cannot be granted as exceptions to instructions. The immigration instructions are publically available and [published in an amendment circular and in the Operational Manual on the Immigration New Zealand website](#).

Prospective applicants who don't currently hold a visa must:

- Meet health and character requirements for temporary entry
- Be a bona fide applicant
- Meet the funds or sponsorship requirements for visitors
- Meet onward travel requirements.

The starting point for any consideration is that the New Zealand border is closed. However, an exception may be made in extremely limited cases.

Before submitting a request, people should consider the availability of flights to New Zealand and travel restrictions for any country they may need to transit on the way to New Zealand.

Exceptions based on humanitarian factors

For exceptions based on humanitarian reasons, factors that an immigration officer will consider include:

- The person's connection to New Zealand and to the place they are currently located
- Whether New Zealand is their primary place of residence, and how long they have been away from New Zealand
- Other options available to the person
- The impact of not giving an exception

- Whether the Ministry of Health or a District Health Board supports the provision of any medical treatment that may be required by an applicant.

Exceptions for those working in the Health sector travelling to New Zealand

Visa applications will be prioritised for key roles necessary for the health response in New Zealand.

An essential health care worker is defined as a current or new employee with a signed offer of employment from one of the listed agencies and who has a commencement date from March to June 2020. The employee will hold an acceptable key clinical or non-clinical position working in:

- A District Health Board
- The New Zealand Blood Service
- Hospice or palliative care
- A primary care practice such as urgent care or a medical or healthcare centre
- Aged residential care, respite or continuing care facility.

Key clinical or non-clinical positions within the agencies listed are as follows:

- Medical Doctors
- Nurses
- Midwives
- Psychologist, Physiotherapist
- Technical and Scientific staff working in theatre, laboratory, radiology, cardiology, blood service, nuclear medicine, oncology, haematology, pathology, hyperbaric medicine and mortuary and Research staff.
- Care and Support Workers; Aged Care, Child Health and Palliative/hospice care workers; Mental Health and Forensic care workers.

People under this exception must work in one of these occupations. For example, they must have an offer of employment or support from a New Zealand employer or the Ministry of Health. Consideration will be given as to whether the person holds the necessary qualifications and registration (if required) to work in New Zealand.

Partners and dependent children of essential health workers who will accompany them may also be included in the request.

Citizens of Samoa and Tonga

This exception is only for citizens of Samoa and Tonga making essential travel to New Zealand. It does not apply to their partners or dependent children. Any family member must have their own critical purpose for travelling to New Zealand.

Any other essential workers agreed by the Government

The COVID-19 All of Government Officials group will identify and consider exceptions for essential workers. This will be limited to workers in occupations which are critical to delivering the response to COVID-19 and/or maintaining critical infrastructure.

Exceptions will be decided by the Government following advice from officials. Only

people specifically identified as essential workers by the COVID-19 All of Government Officials will be granted visas under this exception type.

Partners and dependent children must be invited individually to apply under this exception. This will only happen when it is appropriate to do so based on the circumstances of the essential worker.

Varying conditions to support the Healthcare Sector

The Government has made a number of changes to temporary work visa settings to better support the health sector response to managing COVID-19. Immigration instructions reflecting government decisions will be issued shortly.

International students in healthcare roles

International Students currently employed in healthcare roles (including aged residential care) will also now be able to work full-time for three months in order to support the public health response to COVID-19.

Normally international students can only work 20 hours per week and full-time during vacation periods.

International students currently employed in healthcare roles, including aged care, will now be able to work full-time for three months in order to support the public health response to COVID-19.

Students who are employed in healthcare roles and who want to work more than 20 hours should discuss their plans with their education provider because the student must still meet their study requirements.

The three-month time limit reduces the risk of full-time work detracting from the student's study, where remote learning is being undertaken.

This change is to ensure that the current settings for student work rights are not a barrier to meeting immediate staffing needs for the COVID-19 health response.

Lower skilled temporary healthcare workers

Lower skilled temporary healthcare workers that are currently in New Zealand can now work in New Zealand for an additional 12 months before they are subject to the stand down period. This will allow those health workers with lower skilled Essential Skills visas who have worked in New Zealand for three years an additional 12 months before they are subject to a stand down period where they must leave New Zealand.

This will provide additional certainty for those impacted, some of whom will be affected by the first stand down period from 28 August 2020, and it will also help maintain existing workforces at this critical time.

Extension of Visas under the Epidemic Management Notice

The Epidemic Management Notice (EMN) affects holders of a work, student, visitor, limited or interim visa with an expiry date of 2 April to 9 July 2020 inclusive who are in New Zealand on 2 April 2020. These individuals will have their visas automatically extended to 25 September 2020. The policy provides certainty for individuals already in the country as they won't need to worry about becoming unlawful during this uncertain time.

Extended visas under the EMN is an automated process. The process to update

Extending visas under the EMN is an automated process. The process to update client records for the onshore temporary visas that are in scope to be extended under the EMN will be carried out during the day on Thursday 2 April.

Given the circumstances, there are some limitations to how we can notify people about the extension of their visa. Where practicable, we will email people about the extension directly. These emails will be sent before the end of Friday 3 April.

Where we have multiple applicants using the same email address, we have not been able to customise the notification, and a generic email about the update will be sent to the email address.

In this case, please use the Visa Verification Service to confirm that your clients' visas have been extended, and notify them accordingly, or send them instructions about how to use the Visa Verification Service themselves. Information about the Visa Verification Service is [on the INZ website](#). It requires a simple registration process using RealMe.

Please note that there is a slight lag in refreshing the visa information in the Visa Verification Service, but it should be available from the morning of Friday 3 April.

Visa processing update

All Immigration New Zealand offices are closed for the foreseeable future as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We only have skeleton staff in New Zealand and their only priority is dealing with any COVID-19 requests. Responses are being prioritised based on the direction of government e.g. health workers, and are intended only for exceptional cases.

Immigration New Zealand cannot extend visa durations other than under the terms of the [Epidemic Management Notice](#). You may withdraw any undecided applications, but visa fees or levies paid for completed applications will not be refunded or deferred for another visa. Per the terms of use for NZeTA, no refunds will be given for people no longer able to travel to New Zealand, however NZeTA are valid for two years.

Visas expiring before 2nd April - Section 61 requests

We will continue to process priority Section 61 requests to provide certainty for temporary migrants in New Zealand as they face the challenges of being in a foreign country at this extraordinary time.

Priority processing is given to those applicants whose immigration status has been directly impacted by the COVID-19 response. We expect to allocate these requests for processing within 2-3 working days.

For those approved requests, they will be granted temporary visas valid at least until September 2020, in line with the S78 of the Immigration Act.

If applicants currently do not hold a valid visa to remain in New Zealand (their visa has already expired) they should send an email outlining their circumstances to s61@mbie.govt.nz. Please include:

- Personal details — full name, date of birth - and Immigration New Zealand (INZ) client number if known
- A copy of the personal details page in the applicant's passport.
- Applicant contact details — email address, phone number and postal address
- An explanation of the applicant's circumstances

- What type of visa the applicant would like — for example a visitor visa — and how long they believe they might be required to extend their stay in NZ.

More information

During this time of uncertainty, we know many of you have questions and concerns about immigration-related matters. We are continuing to provide advice to Ministers on the issues being raised and will continue sharing information with you as soon as information becomes available.

Our contact centre is receiving more than twice our usual weekly volume of calls. Please only call in urgent circumstances.

[Our website](#) remains the best place for you to get up to date immigration-related information.

www.govt.nz - your guide to finding and using New Zealand government services

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Any questions, please let us know;

- Phone: +64 (0)275 706 540

- Email: jpeter@terranoconsultancy.co.nz