New Zealanders 'key part of Australian economy' - PM

Jane Patterson

Comments made by an Australian minister telling New Zealanders to go home if they have no means of support have not impressed Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern.

Photo: 123RF

Australia's acting Immigration Minister Alan Tudge said any New Zealander who can't support themselves on the welfare provisions available, should consider returning across the Tasman.

Ardern said that could apply to a large number of New Zealanders, and Australia should be taking a longer term

view.

"If they wish for Australia to be in a position to gear up in the aftermath of the outbreak, they now need a workforce to do that.

"And New Zealanders make up that workforce, they on average, earn more and pay more taxes than others," Ardern said.

"They are a key part of the Australian economy."

Jacinda Ardern. Photo: Pool / Getty

Ardern said New Zealanders also contributed to the health workforce.

"There are some, for instance, who won't be being kept on because they may have been involved in contractual

arrangements in the health workforce and in elective services, and that, I would have thought again, would be a workforce they would wish to keep."

Tudge said that while citizens, permanent residents and many New Zealanders had access to unconditional work rights and government payments (including the new JobKeeper and JobSeeker payments), temporary visa holders did not.

Around 672,000 New Zealanders hold the special category 444 visa.

New Zealanders on 444 visas and who arrived in Australia before 26 February 2001 have access to welfare payments and the JobKeeper payment.

Those 444 visa holders who arrived after 2001 have access to the JobKeeper payment. Those who have lived in Australia for 10 years or more have access to JobSeeker payments for six months.