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Immigration New Zealand continues to focus on immediate priorities from the Government under COVID-19 Alert Level 4.

As of today we have received 2,406 expressions of interest (EOI) from people who believe they meet [exceptions to the border closure](#). Of the 1,976 EOIs decided so far, just 369 met the criteria and have been invited to apply for a visa.

Under the [Epidemic Management Notice](#), visas have now been automatically extended for 85,000 temporary visa holders in New Zealand whose visas were to expire between 2 April and 9 July.

Our [website has been updated](#) with new information for Settlement service providers, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO), community groups, or individuals who work with or know recent migrants and/or former refugees.

Deferral of Expression of Interest selections

The Government has decided to defer some Expression of Interest selections associated with some residence programmes.

With international travel severely restricted for the foreseeable future, and with countries significantly affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, it does not make practical or humanitarian sense to offer residence visas to individuals who are unlikely to be able to activate their visa in time.

We also don't want to create any potential public health risk by encouraging travel by individuals while we are at a heightened alert level.

INZ acknowledges that there's a lot of interest in these EOI selections and that this will be disappointing for a number of applicants.

The deferrals are a temporary measure in response to the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak. INZ will continue to reassess when EOI selections can take place as the COVID-19 situation develops.

Skilled Migrant Category selections deferred

The Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) is subject to a two-step process that requires intending applicants to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) and then be invited to apply. An application must be made within four months of a person being invited to apply and must contain all information required for INZ to make a decision.

The fortnightly selection of EOIs from the SMC pool will be deferred until further notice due to the difficulty in obtaining the required documents and evidence to submit an application and INZ's limited visa processing capacity during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Parent Category selections deferred

The first selection from the Parent Category Expressions of Interest pool, which was scheduled for late May 2020, will be deferred until further notice due to the difficulty in obtaining the required documents and evidence to submit an application and INZ's

limited visa processing capacity during the COVID-19 outbreak.

All those who submitted an EOI for the Parent Category will be notified about the changes.

RSE employee movements

During the COVID-19 Alert Level 4 period Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) employees are doing essential work for the horticulture / viticulture industry, identified by the Ministry for Primary Industries as essential services associated with food production. This includes picking and packaging horticultural / viticultural produce for local and export markets.

RSE workers may be required to move to where labour is needed to support continued food production. Any movement of RSE workers will be carefully managed by their employer. Their employer is fully responsible for the arrangement and safety of their workers while in transit.

RSEs are required to submit to INZ travel and accommodation plans that meet the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Alert Level 4 guidelines. INZ and the Labour Inspectorate must give approval before any worker is relocated. Approved workers will have an authorised letter for their travel.

Teams of RSE employees are treated as a bubble that will not interact with other groups outside of it. Each bubble must be transported in isolation between regions and continue to be isolated when accommodated at the new location. RSEs are responsible for supplying personal protective equipment (PPE) for their employees.

Transiting and departure from New Zealand

The New Zealand Government announced this Monday that New Zealand will enter into transit arrangements with a range of countries to make it easier for each other's citizens to get home.

Current transit agreements:

- Australian citizens, residents and immediate family (partner or spouse, legal guardian and dependent children under the age of 24) are able to transit New Zealand to Australia. Transiting travellers must remain airside and cannot enter New Zealand.
- New Zealand citizens, residents and immediate family (partner, legal guardian and dependent children) who normally live in Australia are able to transit New Zealand to return to Australia. If you want to transit, you need to remain airside and not enter New Zealand. If you enter New Zealand, you will be required to self-isolate.
- New Zealand citizens, permanent residents who normally live in New Zealand and immediate family (partner, legal guardian and dependent children) are able to transit Australia to New Zealand. Transiting travellers

children) are able to transit Australia to New Zealand. Transiting travellers must remain airside and cannot enter Australia.

No other agreements have been made yet. When an agreement is made the details will be [updated here](#).

Border exceptions

The New Zealand border [remains closed](#) to almost all travellers in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. More information about the process for making a request to travel under one of the exceptional circumstances is [on our website](#).

Operation Manual

We are experiencing intermittent issues with publishing immigration instruction changes to the Operational Manual. We will continue to update the Operational Manual as frequently as possible, but there may continue to be delays in publishing while New Zealand remains at Alert Level 4. You can always find the most recent amendments to immigration instructions in the amendment circular distributed via email and published on the [INZ website](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

Who's eligible for an exception to the border restrictions?

The New Zealand [border is currently closed](#) to all but New Zealand citizens and residents. But the New Zealand government acknowledges that 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.

What is the process for seeking an exception to travel restrictions?

[A process](#) has now been put in place by Immigration New Zealand (INZ) for requests to be made for exceptions to the border closure for [exceptional circumstances](#).

People who are outside New Zealand and think they may be eligible for an exception can make a request to INZ by using a request form available on the INZ website. Before submitting a request, consider the availability of flights to New Zealand and travel restrictions for any country you may need to transit on the way to New Zealand.

What about immediate family of New Zealand citizens or residents who are travelling with them?

Immediate family who are not citizens or residents can make a request to Immigration New Zealand to undertake this travel. 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.

What about Australian citizens and permanent residents who normally live in New Zealand?

Australian citizens and permanent residents who normally live in New Zealand can make a request to Immigration New Zealand to return 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.

How does the process work?

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An individual needs to submit a request for an exception to the border restrictions. 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 visitor visa, or to vary their existing visa to allow them to travel.

How long will the process take?

INZ will endeavour to respond to Expressions of Interests within three working days, depending on demand. Visa applications from individuals who have been invited to apply for an exception will be prioritised.

On what sort of grounds are exceptions being given, or able to be given?

Exceptions may be considered on a case by case basis, for

- Health and other essential workers
- Citizens of Samoa and Tonga for essential travel to New Zealand
- 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
- Humanitarian reasons.

Very few requests have been approved to date.

What are the exceptions with regards to the partners of NZ citizens or residents wishing to still travel to NZ to be with their NZ partner? Is there a process to allow entry for non-resident or citizen partners, approved visas, who are offshore but the NZ permanent resident or citizen is onshore?

The health and wellbeing of New Zealand and ensuring we minimise the spread of COVID-19 is our number one priority at the moment. Exceptions may be considered on a case by case basis for individuals who meet the criteria.

What qualifies as humanitarian grounds?

Immigration New Zealand has the discretion to make humanitarian exceptions in extremely limited cases. Officers may take into account factors such as:

- 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.

What is the definition of essential health workers as identified by the Government?

Government:

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.

What occupations are covered?

The exception for essential health workers applies to people who hold the necessary qualifications and registration (if required) to work in NZ. 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.

This exception also applies to the essential health workers' partners and dependent children.

What are other essential workers identified by the Government?

The COVID-19 All of Government Officials group will identify and consider exceptions for other essential 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.

Essential workers are considered by the COVID-19 All of Government Officials group as critical to delivering the response to COVID-19 and /or maintaining critical infrastructure, and agreed to by the Minister of Immigration and other responsible Ministers. For more information go to <https://covid19.govt.nz/government-actions/covid-19-alert-level/essential-businesses/>

Extensions to Visas under Epidemic Management Notice

Why are you automatically extending visas?

The Government has ensured that there is some certainty for temporary migrants in New Zealand as they face the challenges of being in a foreign country at this extraordinary time.

Who does this affect?

The epidemic management notice 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. Confirmation of extensions have been emailed to visa holders. [Visa holders can also confirm their visa expiry date has been extended by using the Visa Verification Service on the INZ website.](#)

How many people will this affect?

There are around 85,000 temporary visa holders in New Zealand whose visas were to expire between 2 April and 9 July. These visa holders have had their visas automatically extended until 25 September 2020.

Why did visa holders with temporary visas expiring before 1 April 2020 have to apply for a new visa but those with visas expiring afterwards automatically get a visa extension?

The New Zealand Government's epidemic management notice relating to immigration matters was announced on Tuesday 24 March 2020 and came into effect on Thursday 2 April 2020. The time between the announcement and implementation of this measure was needed to ensure that the automatic rollover of any visa, and its conditions, is appropriate for their situation.

Do people with NZETAs qualify for extension?

All NZETA holders are issued a three month visitor visa on arrival into New Zealand. Under the epidemic management notice their visa will be extended to 25 September 2020 (the same as those who are on visitor visas).

Do people have to pay for visa extensions?

People with 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 will have their visas automatically extended to 25 September 2020. As there is no visa application, these individuals are not required to pay a fee.

I am in New Zealand unlawfully because I was unable to depart before the expiry of my temporary visa due to the impacts of COVID-19. What do I do?

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

- your personal details — your full name, date of birth - and Immigration New Zealand (INZ) client number if known
- a copy of the personal details page in your passport.
- your contact details — email address, phone number and postal address
- an explanation of your circumstances
- what type of visa you would like — for example a visitor visa — and how long you believe you might be required to extend your stay in NZ.

Visa flexibility

What's the Government doing to provide greater flexibility for employers during the lockdown?

A number of changes have already been made to temporary work visa settings to better support the all of Government response to COVID-19 and ensure we have the

critical workers we need at this time. To facilitate global health professionals for the COVID-19 response, visa applications will be prioritised for key roles necessary for the health response in New Zealand.

What are you doing about lower-skilled workers in the healthcare sector who face having to leave New Zealand because they have run out of time?

Lower skilled temporary healthcare workers that are currently in New Zealand will be able to 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 for 12 months. 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. This extension will also apply to partners and dependents of affected workers.

What are the main healthcare roles affected by the stand down?

The main healthcare roles affected by the stand-down are Aged or Disabled Carers and Personal Care Assistants, operating in the aged residential care sector. It is acknowledged that some temporary work visa holders working in the health sector affected by the stand down may choose to return to their home countries rather than stay for one more year.

Can the healthcare sector also rely on international students?

Yes. International Students currently employed in healthcare roles (including aged residential care) will now be able to work full-time until 3 July 2020 in order to support the public health response to COVID-19 (subject to students still meeting the study requirements of their student visa). Normally, international students can only work 20 hours per week and full-time during vacation periods to ensure students focus on their education. Removing the 20 hour restriction for students working in healthcare roles will help providers with staffing needs in the COVID-19 response.

How will this policy affect students' learning?

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.

Are there other industries where the Government has agreed to greater flexibility for visa holders?

Yes. Changes have been made to immigration instructions to relax visa restrictions for two groups of current supermarket employees for a period of 30 days to help manage labour supply issues. Between now and 25 April 2020 inclusive work visa holders working in supermarkets can work in some roles other than those specified on their visa. During the same period student visa holders who work in supermarkets can work more than the current maximum of 20 hours per week.

Who do these measures apply to?

These visa measures apply to supermarkets operated by Woolworths New Zealand – owners of Countdown, Super Value and Fresh Choice supermarkets – and Foodstuffs – owners of New World, Pak n Save, Four Square, On the Spot and Raeward Fresh.

What about varying conditions of work visas and changing the definition of full-time work for migrants from the current 30 hours per week?

INZ and other Government agencies involved in the COVID-19 response are engaging regularly with employers and other interest groups and listening to their concerns. Officials are urgently looking at further options to provide flexibility to visa conditions for temporary work visa holders and providing advice to the Government. The Government is actively considering a range of options and will make decisions as soon as possible. However, the priority at the moment is on ensuring the continuation of essential services.

General Travel

What about temporary migrants who want to go home but are stuck here?

The Government understands the current situation is impacting people in many ways.

The Covid-19 wage subsidies are available to anyone legally working in New Zealand. This includes people here on temporary work visas.

Currently our advice to people who are here from overseas, who are not currently employed, and are experiencing financial difficulty during COVID-19 alert level four is to talk to their Embassy or Consulate for assistance. This includes workers here on a Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme, working holiday, short-term visa, students and tourists.

If you are unable to secure self-isolation accommodation, some limited assistance can be provided to find accommodation to self-isolate by contacting the Temporary Accommodation Service (TAS) to register on 0508 754 163.

In extreme cases where you cannot obtain essential supplies during phase 4, contact can be made with the local Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Groups (0800 numbers on website www.civildefence.govt.nz/resources/news-and-events/news/cdem-group-0800-numbers-for-supporting-communities/)

I'm a resident visa holder; can I travel to New Zealand?

Yes. If you hold a residence visa and this is not your first time travelling to New Zealand on your residence visa you can enter New Zealand.

I hold a residence visa but have not yet travelled to New Zealand on this visa; can I travel to New Zealand?

No. You are subject to the current travel restrictions and cannot travel to New Zealand.

I am an Australian citizen/permanent resident and normally live in New Zealand; can I still come to New Zealand?

Yes, Australian citizens and permanent residents who normally live in New Zealand can still travel to New Zealand, but they have to make a request to Immigration New Zealand do so. 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.

What happens to employees who are work visa holders who ordinarily live in NZ but have gone offshore for either work or holiday and have return tickets. Can they come back in?

The Government's current border restrictions and alert level 4 mean that people in this situation are not able to come back to New Zealand unless they meet the strict exception criteria.

Can the first entry date on a work visa be changed to allow people with approved visas offshore to travel later instead of applying for a variation or new visa?

No decisions have been made on this issue yet. This is a rapidly evolving situation and we need to ensure that any decisions take into account the wider impacts of COVID-19, including any changes to the labour market.

If a temporary work visa holder is overseas and cannot travel back to New Zealand for their job, does this impact on the validity of their current work visa?

If the work visa is linked to a specific job and the job is still available, then the visa will remain valid and the individual will be able to travel to New Zealand when the travel restrictions have been lifted (unless they meet the exception criteria and can travel sooner).

However, if the job is no longer available, then the work visa will no longer be valid.

An employee cannot apply for a new visa because they cannot obtain the required documentation for their visa i.e. police certificate, medical certificate. What options do they have?

All applications are still required to meet normal immigration requirements, which for some will include providing a police or medical certificate. If individuals are unable to provide this documentation at the time they make their application they should include details of this and the reasons why the documentation is not available. This explanation will be considered when the application is assessed. However, please note that due to our immigration offices being closed, we are currently only processing essential visa applications related to COVID-19 in line with the direction of Government.

If a visitor has a visa and wants to travel to NZ at a later date, can the visa be extended so they don't need to re-apply?

INZ is currently looking into this issue. However, given that the border is currently closed and New Zealand is at alert level 4, this is not one of our priority issues to resolve at the moment.

More information

Our contact centre is receiving a significant volume of calls. Please only call in urgent circumstances.

[Our website](#) remains the best place for you to get up to

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

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