

Also for enquiries and or advise;

Mobile: +64 (0)275706540

Email: jpeter@terranovaconsultancy.co.nz

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Immigration New Zealand is focused on our urgent work under COVID-19 Alert Level 4 while also planning for the next phase.

To prepare for when the Government may next announce an Alert Level change, we are working through how we will operate under Alert Level 3 with the health and safety of our staff top of mind.

We are continuing to respond to immediate Government priorities and working to facilitate travellers who meet exceptions to the border closure.

As of today we have received 3,469 expressions of interest (EOI) from people who believe they meet exceptions to the border closure. Of the 3,157 EOIs so far, 639 meet the criteria and have been invited to apply for a visa.

Relaxing visa conditions

The Government has agreed to relax visa conditions for a short period to allow temporary migrants and international students to further assist with our essential services during the COVID-19 response.

This decision - which comes into effect tomorrow - will help businesses better respond to changed circumstances and enable continuity of essential services while New Zealand remains at Alert Level 3 or 4 and also enable temporary migrants and international students to move into the aged care workforce.

Temporary migrants already employed in essential services will be able to vary their hours and be redeployed to do other roles within their current workplaces. They can also do their current role in different workplaces to help essential businesses keep operating while New Zealand remains at Alert Level 3 or 4 and six weeks after that.

International students who are already employed in an essential services role will be able to work longer hours while New Zealand remains at Alert Level 3 or 4 and for six weeks following. Students who are employed in an essential services role and wish to work more than 20 hours must still meet their study requirements and should discuss their plans with their education provider.

It is anticipated this will help employers in essential industries to maintain their labour pool as we understand hiring would be very difficult while New Zealand remains at Alert Level 3 or 4. The six week period following a reduction in the New Zealand Alert Level to Level 2 or below will enable employers to recruit local staff or retrain existing staff to meet changes in demand.

Any amendment to an employee's conditions of work must be compliant with normal New Zealand employment law and the individual or collective employment agreement relevant to the employee.

Businesses that are considered essential to support New Zealand during Alert Level 3 or 4 can be found on [MBIE's home](#) or [MBIE's information for essential sectors](#).

FAQs - Exentions for people to travel to N7

1.1.1 EXCEPTIONS FOR PEOPLE TO TRAVEL TO NZ

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, including:

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

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?

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?

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

- 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. More information [here](#).

FAQs - 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 will be emailed to all visa holders.

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

Immigration has announced on Tuesday 27 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.

FAQs - 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 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 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

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 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 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 20** 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?

The Government has agreed to relax visa conditions for a short period to allow temporary migrant workers and international students to further assist with our essential services during the COVID-19 response.

This decision will help essential businesses that are operating during Alert Level 4 to keep operating while New Zealand remains at Alert Level 3 or 4.

Work visa holders with employer-specific work visas already employed in essential services will be able to vary their hours and be redeployed to do other roles within their current workplace. They can also perform their current role in a different workplace to help essential businesses keep operating while New Zealand remains at Alert Level 3 or 4 and six weeks after that.

International students who are already employed in an essential services role will be able to work longer hours for their current employer while New Zealand remains at Alert Level 3 or 4 and for six weeks following. Students who are employed in an essential services role and wish to work more than 20 hours must still meet their study requirements and should discuss their plans with their education provider.

The short timeframe will enable employers in essential industries to maintain their labour pool as hiring would be very difficult while New Zealand remains at Alert Level 3 or 4.

Any amendment to an employee's conditions of work must be compliant with normal New Zealand employment law and the individual or collective employment agreement relevant to the employee.

People holding interim visas are not able to apply for a Variation of Conditions.

There are no fees or levies payable for a Variation of Conditions under this special category.

The changes come into effect [on Thursday 16 April 2020](#) and the INZ website will be updated with further information, including the relevant form, as soon as possible.

A list of essential sectors during Alert Level 3 or 4 can be found on [MBIE's home](#) or [MBIE's list of essential sectors](#)

FAQs - Deferral of programmes

What visa programmes have been deferred?

The Government has decided to defer:

- selections for Expressions of Interest (EOI) in the Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) and the Parent Category
- ballot registrations for the Samoan Quota (SQ) and Pacific Access Category (PAC)
- 19 capped Working Holiday schemes due to open in the next 6 months.

Why is the Government deferring these visa programmes?

The deferral of these visa programmes will help manage expectations from the public at a time when INZ's capacity is limited due to COVID-19, provide fairness to applicants, and enable INZ to focus available resources on towards urgent COVID-19 related activities.

With international travel severely restricted for the foreseeable future, and with countries significantly affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, it also does not make practical or humanitarian sense to invite people to apply for visas if they are unlikely to be able to obtain the necessary documents needed for their application, or 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.

When will the next SMC and Parent Category EOI selections take place?

The EOI selections for the SMC and Parent Category have been temporarily deferred as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak. **INZ will continue to reassess when EOI selections can take place as the COVID-19 situation develops.**

How long will my SMC Expression of Interest remain valid?

SMC Expressions of Interest (EOI) are valid for six months from the date of initial submission, unless there is no EOI draw, in which case the EOI remains valid until there is a further draw.

INZ will provide more information about the validity of existing EOIs when we have a clearer picture of how long EOI selections will be deferred for.

What happens to individuals who have submitted an SMC EOI but their temporary visa expires while EOI selections are on hold?

If an individual is currently in New Zealand on a temporary visa, it is their responsibility to ensure they hold and maintain a valid visa at all times.

When will the Samoan Quota and Pacific Access Category open?

The Samoan Quota and Pacific Access Category, which were due to open for registrations on 1 April 2020, have been temporarily deferred. The Government has committed to considering a new date and process for these programmes within six months.

What Working Holiday Schemes are being deferred?

The deferral only applies the 19 capped working holiday schemes that were scheduled to open within the next six months. They are: Estonia, Hong Kong, Slovenia, Spain, Hungary, Slovakia, Austria, Luxembourg, South Korea, Taiwan, China, Malta, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam, Croatia, Peru, Brazil, and Argentina.

These 19 schemes will be deferred until further notice.

What about other Working Holiday Scheme arrangements?

Uncapped schemes, such as those from the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States are not affected by this decision and will remain open at this stage.

FAQs - 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) for assistance. 0508 754 400

Accommodation Service (IAS) 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 their website) [here](#).

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.

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.

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

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