


Subject: INZ Update  
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To:

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This week New Zealand entered Alert Level 3 in the response to COVID-19.

Like all businesses, INZ is responding to what the Government announces in terms of New Zealand's Alert levels and the restrictions on businesses to operate.



It is important to be aware that for Immigration New Zealand, most of our operations remain the same as they did under Level 4. **There have been no immediate changes to the border restrictions or visa processing priorities although we will soon start processing a wider range of visa applications.** More information on this will be available on our website soon.

**A limited number of staff will be able to re-enter our onshore visa offices at Alert Level 3, starting with the National Documentation Office today.**

We understand the impact our visa processing restrictions are having on your own businesses. INZ is committed to ensuring we keep you up to date with any new information /decisions we are making.

There are a lot of unknowns at the moment, not just in the immigration space but in New Zealand's economy and labour market as a whole and this has an impact on our business. As you can appreciate, there are a number of things we need to work through in terms of how we operate in the current environment and how we prioritise our work.

## Border updates

Immigration New Zealand has now received 5,962 expressions of interest (EOI) from people who believe they meet [exceptions to the border closure](#). Of the 5,838 EOIs decided so far, 1,231 meet the criteria and have been invited to apply for a visa. The New Zealand border currently remains closed to all but New Zealand citizens and residents.


There are a limited number of exceptions for other travellers, but they should seek approval from Immigration New Zealand before travelling. Our Border staff are focussed on supporting the repatriation flights, both in terms of New Zealanders and their family coming home and foreign citizens transiting through New Zealand to get to their end destination. This is critical work which has required substantial cross-agency logistical planning to ensure good outcomes in a very dynamic environment.

At the same time, international passenger arrivals have plummeted and this has enabled a number of our Border Officers to be temporarily redeployed to All-of-Government response initiatives such as supporting managed isolation and the community compliance centre.

## INZ operations under Alert Level 3

INZ is currently adapting to operating in Alert Level 3 and working through the details of when and how we can reopen our onshore offices. A limited number of staff will re-enter the National Documentation Office today. When our other onshore visa offices do reopen, staff numbers will be limited due to strict guidelines under Alert Level 3. We will be in a position to share more information on this soon. Some staff are currently working remotely, however our ability to process visa applications is significantly reduced. We are working to increase our remote processing capacity so that those who can work from home can do so.

While we are now able to safely collect some paper applications from our National Application Document Office, all processing remains focused on visa categories that have been prioritised. We are also planning for what operating in Alert Level 2 will look like, including planning for more staff to be able to return to the office under Alert Level 2 which will enable us to commence processing some paper based applications. INZ will still be subject to strict guidelines at Alert Level 2.




All offshore offices remain closed. The health and safety of our staff will be a primary consideration in any decision to reopen offshore. We do not know when we will be in a position to reopen our offshore offices, but we are continually reviewing local market conditions to determine when we might be able to reopen.

## Visa processing

We are continuing to process urgent COVID-19 related applications including applications from individuals who have a critical purpose for coming to New Zealand.

On top of COVID-19 related applications, INZ is prioritising the following visa categories:

- o Temporary visa applications for Victims of Domestic Violence
- o Partnership category temporary visas (including reassessments)
- o Full fee paying student visas
- o Post study work visas
- o Exceptions to border restrictions



These are applications that can be done remotely without unforeseen difficulties and where the applicant's eligibility is unlikely to have been significantly impacted by COVID-19. More information about visa processing priorities can be found [on our website](#). INZ is not currently processing any applications from people who are offshore unless they meet the strict criteria to be granted an exception to the Border closure. INZ is not currently processing any paper applications from people onshore but this will change over the coming weeks as our staff are able to re-enter offices.


We understand there are many migrants who are waiting on visa applications in other categories and will be anxious for more information on when they can expect their visa to be processed. We simply don't know the answer to this at this stage but we can assure you we are working to provide more certainty as soon as possible. Any decisions on our processing priorities need to be balanced with any wider economic and labour market impacts of COVID-19.

We are reviewing our processing priorities regularly, in line with any decisions announced by the Government and will keep you updated.

## Migrant hardship

INZ understands that many migrants may have lost their job or had their hours of work and/or wages reduced as a result of COVID-19 and New Zealand's Alert level system, which means they are not meeting their visa requirements. INZ will be taking a reasonable approach to individuals in this situation and we will not be focussing our compliance activity on these individuals in the first instance. INZ will also take into account any impacts on an individual's employment history as a result of COVID-19 during the assessment of any future applications and decisions will be made on a case by case basis based on their individual circumstances.

INZ is unable to give any long term certainty to migrants on temporary visas at this time as there are a number of



we is unable to give any long term certainty to migrants on temporary visas at this time as there are a number of unknowns that we currently need to work through, including taking into account the wider economy and labour market. Migrants who are experiencing financial hardship should contact their Embassy/Consulate for assistance. Migrants who are unable to support themselves or secure employment may also need to consider travelling home when/if they are able to.

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