

**ISSUED Thursday, 28 May 2020**

# **BREAKING NEWS**

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## EOI Status

Immigration New Zealand has now received 11,301 expressions of interest (EOI) from people who believe they meet exceptions to the border closure. Of the 11,106 EOIs decided so far, 2,220 meet the criteria and have been invited to apply for a visa.

## Visa processing update

With more staff re-entering the office, visa processing capacity continues to grow. INZ now has 97% of onshore Immigration Officers currently able to work. All offshore offices remain closed.

While we now have more onshore capacity, we do expect visa applications may take longer than usual to process. There will also be an increase in the time and effort required in processing some visa application types due to additional requests for information or comment being required.

We often receive applications that have errors or are missing required information such as medical information, police certificates, employment agreements or the correct legal name of the business. It's important to get all information correct in applications; otherwise this slows down the process.

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.

INZ is committed to processing visas as fast as practicable but application processing times always depend on the complexity of an application. It is critical that the right level of scrutiny is applied to ensure the right decisions are made for New Zealand.

## Short-term variation of conditions for essential services

As New Zealand moved into Alert level 2 at 11.59pm on Wednesday 13 May, any visa holder who received a short term variation will revert back to their original visa conditions at 11.59pm on Wednesday 24 June 2020. We intend to proactively inform clients about this condition expiry. If you have represented a client for a short term variation you can expect to receive this email.

## INZ help for migrants

Queenstown Lakes District Council is currently in the process of setting up a community support and information service in Frankton. Other agencies, including Immigration New Zealand and the Ministry of Social Development, will be in Queenstown from early next week to further discuss logistical details associated with the operation.

While there may be a small number of appointment-only meetings next week, we are anticipating the service will be fully operational the following week.

The INZ team will consist of staff who can help temporary migrants understand their immigration options, relationship managers who help coordinate information, engage with employers and provide information to migrants on options to depart New Zealand if they have no pathway to remain in the country.

The INZ team will be established for an initial period of three weeks from Tuesday 2 June 2020 to help the significant population of migrant workers that have become unemployed as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Staff at the one stop shop will be on hand to provide information to migrants wanting to remain in New Zealand and make them aware of their job prospects in a changing labour market with an increasing number of unemployed New Zealanders looking for work.

Temporary visa holders who are unemployed or in difficulty and want to return home should in the first instance talk to their Consulate or Embassy for assistance and information about the availability of flights to their home country. The COVID-19 wage subsidy is available to anyone legally working in New Zealand.

Some decisions have already been made to provide temporary migrants in New Zealand with some certainty. An Epidemic Management Notice relating to immigration matters came into effect from 2 April 2020. This means that holders of a work, student, visitor, limited or interim visa with an expiry date of 2 April to 9 July 2020 inclusive who were in New Zealand on 2 April 2020 have had their visas automatically extended until 25 September 2020.

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.

More information about changes to visa conditions is available at [www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/covid-19/coronavirus-update-inz-response](http://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/covid-19/coronavirus-update-inz-response)

## **Labour market tests in Queenstown Lakes District**

For roles with an ANZSCO skill level of 4 to 5, employers need to contact Work and Income to ensure there are no suitable New Zealanders available for the role. For Queenstown there are some roles that have been exempt from this process. But with effect from 26 May 2020 the exemptions will no longer apply and employers will need to follow the labour market test process used throughout the rest of the country.

More information: <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/employ-migrants/hire-a-candidate>

## **Migrant and employer information**

Immigration New Zealand is working with businesses, helping them navigate an environment where more New Zealanders are available to work, while continuing to uphold the rights of migrant workers. The flyer here provides helpful information for both migrants and employers.

## Contact details

Please contact us should you have any questions and queries, initially by email.

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