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BREAKING NEWS

(re-issued)

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Source: Immigration New Zealand

EOI status

Immigration New Zealand has now received 21,341 expressions of interest (EOI) from people who believe they meet exceptions to the border closure. Of the 20,922 EOIs decided so far, 4,029 meet the criteria and have been invited to apply for a visa.

Around 30% of people applying for exceptions do so as family members of NZ citizens or residents, 24% for humanitarian reasons and 20% as partners of temporary work visa holders in New Zealand who are normally resident in NZ.

(I have been advised by the Minister's Office as follow; SMC EOIs 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 continue to reassess when EOI selections can take place as the COVID-19 situation develops. 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.)

Welfare assistance for foreign nationals

The Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) is working with New Zealand Red Cross to deliver welfare assistance for foreign nationals experiencing serious hardship due to COVID-19.

There are increasing reports that some foreign nationals are experiencing serious hardship due to the impacts of COVID-19, and are unable to meet their basic needs. This programme will provide eligible people who have found themselves in a difficult spot with in-kind assistance, so they can meet basic needs, like food and accommodation.

The delivery of assistance will be underpinned by a clear focus on helping people to help themselves. Application mechanisms and any direct case management provided will emphasise the fact that government assistance is temporary, and that returning home is the first option that should be actively pursued.

The programme runs for three months from 1 July 2020. Assistance will be provided to eligible people to help meet basic needs, such as food and accommodation. More information is on the INZ website.

How can people apply for support?

From 1 July 2020, people who have found themselves in a tough position due to COVID-19 can check their eligibility and apply through <https://foreignnationals.services.govt.nz>.

What will the assistance pay for?

Under the Programme, assistance may be provided to help people who are eligible and need it most meet basic, urgent and immediate needs, such as:

- food and household goods required to meet urgent and immediate needs
- blankets, hot water bottles and basic clothing to meet urgent and immediate needs
- over-the-counter medication to meet urgent and immediate needs
- accommodation (including rent, boarding costs and rent arrears)
- utilities (electricity, gas). Excludes internet and broadband connection and plans
- if required, pre-paid phone cards to enable emergency communication and communication with consulate/embassy
- petrol/travel (limited to travel required to shift to new location for employment purposes or to airport to leave New Zealand).

Assistance will be made directly to third-parties, such as landlords or power companies, no cash payments will be made.

Will it fund flights home?

No. The programme will provide in-kind assistance to help eligible foreign nationals who have found themselves in serious hardship due to COVID-19 meet their basic, urgent and immediate needs.

How have foreign nationals been supported so far?

This Programme is intended to fill the gap that will be left as New Zealand's immediate emergency response to COVID-19 winds down. Until now,

support has been provided by the Civil Defence and Emergency Management (CDEM) Groups.

Who is eligible?

Each person's circumstances will be considered at an individual level to ensure support is reaching those who are eligible and need it most.

In-kind assistance will be provided to all classes of temporary visa holders where it has been established that:

- the person is experiencing serious hardship: and
- all other avenues of potential support have been exhausted, such as access to savings or other assets, insurance cover, consular assistance from their own foreign missions, or help from family and friends.

Eligibility will be established through a series of checks on visa and employment status, savings, alternative sources of income or in-kind support, and outstanding debts.

What classes of visa does this apply to?

It applies to all classes of temporary visa holders.

How long will the Programme run?

This is a temporary and transitional mechanism that will run for three months, with the intention that at the end of this time, people have either returned to their home country or have secured alternative means of support.

How long will it take for assistance to be provided?

We are working to target of provision of assistance within 48 hours. We expect some categories of in-kind assistance could be made immediately, while others may require up to 48 hours to process.

Information for offshore applicants

As you will be aware, processing of visa applications for offshore applicants has been on hold to date. This is because legally INZ is not able to grant a visa to individuals who are unlikely to meet entry requirements.

The bar for being granted an exception to the border restrictions is very high and people who are not New Zealand citizens or residents are unlikely to meet entry requirements as a result of the border restrictions.

We are working through options to recommence processing for a limited range of offshore visa applications.

While INZ will not be able to grant any visas while the border restrictions are in place, we are looking to start processing a limited number of offshore applications. This will help reduce the backlog of applications waiting to be processed when the border restrictions are lifted.

We will provide you with a further update on this as soon as decisions are made around what visa categories we will process.

What is the legal basis for INZ not processing applications from individuals who are currently offshore?

Under immigration instructions, INZ is unable to grant a visa to any individual who is unlikely to meet entry requirements to New Zealand. With the current border restrictions in place, there are limited people who will meet entry requirements.

I am offshore and have submitted a visa application. What happens with that?

Visa applications that have already been submitted will remain in the processing queue and will be processed as soon as border restrictions are lifted and individuals are likely to meet entry requirements.

Can I still apply for a visa if I am offshore?

Individuals who are offshore are currently still able to make an application. However, most individuals will not meet the strict border exception criteria to be granted entry in New Zealand. Therefore their application is unlikely to be processed at this time.

I have submitted a visa application and made a request for a border exception? Will my visa be processed if I am granted an exception to the border restrictions?

Individuals who are granted a border exception are invited to apply for a visa that best fits their circumstances or to vary their visa conditions if they already have one. However, the bar for being granted an exception to the border restrictions is set high to help stop the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of people already in New Zealand. Individual requests for exceptions to the border restrictions are considered against the strict criteria as set out in immigration instructions.

COVID-19 Public Health Response (Maritime Border) Order 2020

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 situation, Cabinet has made a number of decisions regarding border control that affect marine crews, which will see us step up our support and engagement with the maritime community and across Government.

Cabinet has decided that stricter rules are needed to protect New Zealand's maritime border and staff from COVID-19, and to provide consistent rules for safe crew changes and the safe movement of cargo to and from New Zealand.

Contact details

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

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