



## COVID-19 New Zealand Visa FAQ

### Information for all visa holders | 21 May 2020

#### Are visas still being processed by Immigration New Zealand (INZ)?

INZ continues to process visas for people who have a critical purpose for coming to New Zealand and are seeking an exception to the current New Zealand border restrictions and for essential services employers who wish to use their workforce more flexibly.

INZ has also been processing some visa categories for applicants who are already in New Zealand including temporary visas for victims of domestic violence, Partnership category temporary visas, full fee paying student visas and post study work visas.

INZ is still not processing any applications for people who are offshore unless they meet the strict criteria to be granted an exception to the Border closure.

**Note:** INZ has not been working during Alert Level 4 and Alert Level 3. Therefore, any visa processing outside of the above parameters has not been taking place.

#### I am a temporary visa holder who was on holiday overseas when the border was closed and can't get back, when will I be able to return to New Zealand?

The current border restrictions mean temporary visa holders who are currently offshore are not allowed to come back in to New Zealand unless they meet the strict border exception criteria.

#### What is the process for holders of work visas who are currently offshore to return to New Zealand?

The New Zealand border is currently closed to almost all travellers to help stop the spread of COVID-19, however if you believe you meet the exemption criteria to be permitted to travel in to New Zealand then you may apply through the [exemption request process](#).



## **When will Alert Level 2 come into force and what changes will there be to restrictions?**

New Zealand will move to Alert Level 2 in stages, so far the Prime Minister has announced the following will be permitted from 11:59pm Wednesday 13 May:

- Opening of retail, malls, cafes, restaurants, cinemas and other public spaces including playground and gyms to reopen, ensuring they maintain distancing and hygiene measures
- Health services to reopen
- Gatherings of up to 10 people, this includes weddings, funerals and religious services

## **Is recruitment for new migrants still possible?**

Any decision made in regards to employing migrant labour in the future will need to take into account the wider impacts of COVID-19, including any changes to the labour market. In the short term employers should consider alternative solutions, for example employing someone already currently in New Zealand. Currently INZ is not processing visas for offshore applicants we believe they will begin processing applications as border restrictions lift and the lockdown ends.

## **I agreed with a migrant employee to reduce hours and/or reduce pay during the lockdown, what do I need to do to ensure I am not in breach of my sponsorship obligations?**

The Government is looking at options for temporary work visa holders who have been affected by COVID-19 and will make decisions about visa conditions shortly but currently the priority is to ensure the continuation of essential services. The consensus as an industry is that INZ will take a pragmatic and flexible approach to reduction in hours and wages.



## Has the Government relaxed visa conditions to allow for employees working in essential services to change occupations?

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. The policy applies to employees already working in essential services and you must make a [request to vary visa conditions of workers in essential services](#).

## My current visa is due to expire. What are my options?

People who hold a current 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 will have their visas automatically extended to 25 September 2020 by INZ. An email confirming the extensions will be emailed to all visa holders.

If you are eligible to have your visa extended you should have received a confirmation email from INZ. The most recent email address that was provided to them will be used. If Absolute Immigration lodged your application, we will receive the confirmation email and will forward it onto you immediately.

You can confirm your visa expiry date by checking the [Visa Verification Service](#) on the INZ website.

If you fall outside these dates, we would recommend getting in touch for specific advice. We also recommend applying for further visas even if the extension above applies due to changes in labour market testing and policy.

We also recommend looking into residence options for NZ which will give you more certainty.



## **I am an Australian citizen. How am I impacted by the current border restrictions?**

The New Zealand border remains closed to almost all travellers to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Unless there is an exception or transit arrangement in place, this includes transiting through New Zealand. New Zealand has entered into an arrangement with Australia.

The arrangement means that Australian citizens, residents and immediate family (partner or spouse, legal guardian and dependent children under the age of 24) are able to transit through New Zealand to Australia. Transiting travellers cannot enter New Zealand and must remain airside, transit for no more than 24 hours.

## **I am a New Zealand citizen and normally live in Australia. Can I return to New Zealand and how am I impacted by the border restrictions?**

If you normally live in Australia and are a New Zealand citizen, resident or immediate family (partner, legal guardian and dependent children) you are able to transit New Zealand to return to Australia. You need to remain airside and not enter New Zealand, if you want to transit. You will be required to self-isolate if you enter New Zealand.

If you are a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident and normally live in New Zealand or are immediate family (partner, legal guardian and dependent children), you are able to transit Australia to New Zealand. You must remain airside and cannot enter Australia as a transiting traveller.

## **What obligations do employers have for migrants who were employed by them before and during the epidemic notice period?**

Employers must continue to comply with New Zealand employment law. More information on [employment obligations can be found here](#).



## **My employee has had their work visa extended. Do I now have to extend their employment as well?**

Employers are not required to extend fixed-term employment because an employee's visa has been extended, unless they wish to continue employing the individual.

## **As an employer, what will be the impact on my ability to employ staff on work visas in the future if we have to declare we have previously made workers redundant?**

Employers must still demonstrate that they have attempted to hire New Zealand citizens or residents before being permitted to supplement their New Zealand workforce with any migrant labour. They may also need to demonstrate that the business is in the financial position to take on any additional employees they wish to hire.

## **Can the first entry date on my visa be extended so that it doesn't expire while border restrictions are in place? What about for resident visas?**

INZ is considering the situation of those currently outside of NZ whose visas have either expired or will expire. More information on this will be provided when it is available. INZ can only permit the entry of people who meet the exception criteria set by the New Zealand Government, you can read more about [New Zealand travel exceptions here](#).

## **What should migrants do if they have lost their job and are facing financial 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.

Migrants who are experiencing financial hardship should contact their Embassy or Consulate for assistance. Migrants who are unable to support themselves or secure employment should make steps to leave the country.



## Who do I contact at Absolute Immigration?

Please call us on 1300 227 658 and we will connect you to one of our awesome team members, no matter where they are.

Alternatively you can email us on [aisupport@absoluteimmigration.com](mailto:aisupport@absoluteimmigration.com)