

WGANZ COVID-19 BULLETIN 17 July 2020

Relief for employers with temporary migrants

[The Government](#) has made immediate short-term changes to visa settings for temporary migrants already onshore. The changes:

- Extend 16,500 temporary work visas due to expire by December 2020 by 6 months
- Shift the stand down for 600 workers by 6 months to February 2021
- Ensures New Zealanders needing work continue to be prioritised.

“We are assisting employers to make the most of the available workforce, both New Zealanders and temporary migrants on shore in New Zealand,” says Minister Iain Lees-Galloway.

“Migrant workers who are subject to the 12-month stand-down period and were going to have to leave New Zealand this year will now be able to stay for the duration of the extension. This will benefit around 600 lower-skilled visa holders who would have been subject to the 12 months stand down period.

“This will provide some immediate relief and certainty for migrants and employers in the short term while they recover from the impact of COVID-19 and adjust to the changing labour market conditions where more New Zealanders will be available for work.

Iain Lees-Galloway urges employers to focus on longer-term workforce planning and recruitment and training of New Zealand jobseekers. “These short-term changes give employers some time to get ready for a changed labour market where more New Zealanders will be looking for work.

“New low-skilled work visas will only be granted for six instead of 12 months as our priority is to preserve and prioritise future job opportunities for New Zealanders and give the system more flexibility to respond to labour market developments.”

Government is continuing to work on a number of changes, which were announced pre-COVID-19. These changes include a different way to define lower-skilled/lower-paid employment and a new process for employer-assisted work visas expected to be fully in place by mid-2021.

Iain Lees-Galloway said that these changes are now more important than ever to support the Government’s wider programme of work for the economy.

“With more New Zealanders looking for work, some employers will need to adjust to a new situation. With the short-term changes we are making, however, there is some lead-in time for employers.”

Overview of changes

Government made decisions to:

- Extend all existing employer-assisted temporary work visas for people who are in New Zealand and whose visas are due to expire before the end of 2020 by six months.
- Delay the stand-down period until February 2021 instead of August 2020. Temporary migrants will be able to remain in New Zealand for a further 6 months after their stand-down would have taken effect (in line with the extension to their visa)
- The stand down means that lower-paid workers on temporary work visas have to leave New Zealand for 12 months after holding a work visa for three consecutive years before they can apply for another lower-skilled visa.
- The stand-down period was introduced in 2017 to prevent lower-skilled, lower-paid foreign workers from becoming well settled in New Zealand without a pathway to residence.
- Reduce the duration of all new low-skilled essential skills visas from 12 to six months for the next 18 months. This will apply to all new lower-skilled Essential Skills work visa applications.

Employers are still expected to genuinely seek to fill job vacancies with New Zealanders and this will be tested when the visas of their existing migrant workers expire. Migrant workers on temporary employer-assisted visa whose job has ended need to apply for a new visa or leave New Zealand if they are able to.

This bulletin is brought to you by AdviceWise People - 0800 692 384. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the bulletin above, please call Philip or Anthony.
