

Return of working holidaymakers a boost to economic recovery

The Minister of Immigration, [Kris Faafoi, says](#) the return of working holidaymakers and more skilled workers from this coming Monday will accelerate New Zealand's economic recovery from COVID-19 by helping to fill workforce shortages and support tourism.

"Before COVID-19 we welcomed around 50,000 working holidaymakers to New Zealand each year, so it's a key milestone in our economic recovery that we're opening our doors to this group of tourists and workers again," Kris Faafoi said.

"From Monday, the critical worker border exception for roles lasting longer than six months will also be widened by reducing the salary criteria to 1.5 times the median wage and removing the requirement to have skills not readily obtainable in New Zealand.

"These expanded settings will benefit a variety of sectors seeking to attract skilled workers, including early to mid-career professionals for roles in the tech sector, business and accounting services, education, construction and the primary industries.

"Getting more working holidaymakers and skilled migrants into the country in the coming weeks and months is a priority for the Government in order to accelerate our recovery, which is why we have reopened this category early in our reconnection plan.

"In order to get people coming to New Zealand as soon as possible we've granted a new 12-month visa to the approximately 19,500 people offshore who previously held a Working Holiday Visa but were unable to use it because of our border restrictions. They will need to use this new visa within the next six months.

The Working Holiday Schemes will reopen in stages, with all uncapped schemes, which account for around three quarters of all working holidaymakers, opening for applications at 10am on Monday 14 March. Capped schemes are being staggered after that. All schemes will be reopened by 13 September.

The uncapped schemes opening on 14 March are Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom, and USA. Other capped Working Holiday Schemes dates can be found [here](#).

Notes

- More information about the Working Holiday Schemes can be found on the [Immigration New Zealand](#) website.
- The new income criteria for the critical worker border exception for roles longer than six months is \$40.50 per hour (1.5 times the current median wage) or \$84,240 a year for a 40-hour week.
- The family reunification border exception for highly skilled workers will be aligned with the expanded settings for long-term critical workers to allow more families to reunite.

Border exceptions for workers will be phased out once applications open for the new Accredited Employer Work Visa in July. Information about the Accredited Employer Work Visa can be found [here](#).

Isolation period reduced from 10 to 7 days; third vaccine becomes available

- COVID-19 cases and household contacts to isolate for a week
- Two negative rapid antigen tests required for household contacts
- 250,000 Novavax vaccines here, people can book from tomorrow

The isolation period for COVID-19 cases and their household contacts will be reduced from 10 to seven days, Minister for COVID-19 Response [Chris Hipkins announced](#) on 9 March 2022.

“We remain committed to reducing the spread of Omicron to protect our health system and each other. However high case numbers and household contacts, and the current 10 day isolation requirement, is having a wider impact on many parts of our lives,” Chris Hipkins said.

“There needs to be a balance between effectively controlling the outbreak and the flow-on effect for business and essential goods and services such as transport and food supply. “The most up to date public health advice is that there is a decline in infectiousness of Omicron over time, and that in most cases transmission occurs within seven days.

“Our primary objective is to stop the chain of transmission as much as possible to manage the spread of Omicron. Seven days isolation will break the vast majority of potential transmissions, while ensuring people can get back to work quicker and therefore reducing the impact on business operations.”

The change will come into effect from 11:59pm Friday 11 March.

Household contacts will need to have a rapid antigen test at day 3 and day 7 of their isolation period. If they become symptomatic they should also get a test, and if the result is positive, they are required to isolate for seven days from that point. If a person is isolating and still has symptoms after seven days, they are advised to stay home until 24 hours after symptoms resolve.

“I urge everyone to make sure they report their rapid antigen test result on My Covid Record, even if it is negative, so we can understand transmission within households and how the outbreak is spreading through communities,” Chris Hipkins said.

“The reduction in the isolation period follows similar changes overseas and increasing evidence that people are most likely to transmit the virus earlier in their infectious period. This evidence also shows that the risk of reinfection within the first three months after someone has Omicron is very low.

“For this reason, recovered cases will no longer need to self-isolate if they become a household contact within 90 days after having the virus. This is an increase from the current 28 days.

“Under the Red setting of the COVID-19 Protection Framework there are additional public health measures in place that reduce the risk of onwards infection. These include limits on the sizes of gatherings, wearing face masks and physically distancing. I urge people to follow these guidelines to continue to protect our vulnerable friends and whānau,” Chris Hipkins said.

Novavax available to book from tomorrow

“New Zealanders awaiting the arrival of Novavax to get vaccinated against COVID-19 will be able to make an appointment online or by phone from 10 March,” Chris Hipkins said.

“A shipment of more than 250,000 Novavax COVID-19 vaccines (Nuvaxovid) has arrived in New Zealand and preparations are well advanced for some vaccination centres to be able to offer it next week. “Novavax will be available for people aged over 18. It requires two doses, with a three-week gap. It has not been approved as a booster dose.

“While the Pfizer vaccine remains the preferred COVID-19 vaccine in New Zealand, Novavax is now available for those people who would prefer, or require, an alternative,” Chris Hipkins said.

You can book a Novavax vaccine through [BookMyVaccine.nz](https://bookmyvaccine.nz) or by calling Healthline from Thursday 10 March, with the first vaccine appointments available at a limited number of sites from Monday 14 March. [More information](#).

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