



COVERSHEET

Minister	Hon Michael Wood	Portfolio	Immigration
Title of Cabinet paper	<i>Reconnecting New Zealanders: Options for Step 5</i>	Date to be published	18 August 2022

List of documents that have been proactively released

Date	Title	Author
April 2022	<i>Reconnecting New Zealanders: Options for Step 5</i>	<i>Office of the Minister of Immigration</i>
19 April 2022	<i>CAB-22-MIN-0139 Minute</i>	<i>Cabinet Office</i>

Information redacted

YES / NO

Any information redacted in this document is redacted in accordance with MBIE's policy on Proactive Release and is labelled with the reason for redaction. This may include information that would be redacted if this information was requested under Official Information Act 1982. Where this is the case, the reasons for withholding information are listed below. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Some information has been withheld for the reasons of international relations, legal professional privilege, constitutional conventions, and free and frank opinions.



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Reconnecting New Zealanders: Options for Step 5

Portfolio Immigration

On 19 April 2022, following reference from the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee, Cabinet:

Background

- 1 **noted** that in March 2022, Cabinet:
 - 1.1 agreed to bring forward reopening for the following categories of travellers originally included in Step 4:
 - 1.1.1 Australian citizens and permanent residents from anywhere in the world – from 11:59pm Tuesday 12 April 2022;
 - 1.1.2 Visa-waiver travellers and existing holders of valid visitor visas – from 11:59pm Sunday 1 May 2022;
 - 1.2 noted that future decisions concerning the timing of reopening for Step 5 would require significant lead-in times owing to the need to amend regulations and reprioritise immigration processing resources;
- [CAB-22-MIN-0072]:

Options for bringing forward Step 5

- 2 **noted** that there are three significant visa categories that remain scheduled to reopen to offshore applications as part of Step 5 in October 2022:
 - 2.1 all other work visas other than the Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV);
 - 2.2 visitor visas;
 - 2.3 student visas;
- 3 **noted** that the timing of the opening of the above visa categories will impact how much pressure is placed on the immigration system and, in turn, how long wait times will be;
- 4 **agreed** to reopen all work visas on 4 July 2022 in line with the AEWV, followed by visitor visas and student visas on 31 July 2022;

Streamlining and efficiency measures

- 5 **endorsed** the Minister of Immigration's decision to extend the timeline to process 80 per cent of 2021 Resident Visas from 12 months (December 2022) to 18 months (June 2023);
- 6 **noted** that the Minister of Immigration has approved the following measures to help Immigration New Zealand to clear queues and pivot resources to the border reopening:
- 6.1 extend onshore Work to Resident visas by six months, through special direction issued under section 78A of the Immigration Act 2009;
- 6.2 issue a new two-year open work visa to onshore holders of Essential Skills, Post Study and Partner of a New Zealander work visas whose visas expire before 31 December 2022, and their partners and dependents;

Ensuring continued ties to the Pacific

- 7 **agreed** to reopen online visitor visa applications from applicants in Pacific Island Forum countries (excluding Australia), including third country nationals in those countries from 16 May 2022;
- 8 Free and frank opinions [REDACTED]

Phasing out border exceptions

- 9 **agreed** to phase out the border exception regime in stages, Confidential advice to Government [REDACTED]
- 10 **authorised** the Minister of Immigration to make final decisions on which border exceptions are phased out at which date;

Legislative amendment

- 11 **noted** that the Minister of Immigration intends to submit the amendments to the Immigration (Visa, Entry Permission, and Related Matters) Regulations 2010 to Cabinet on 2 May 2022, for approval to Executive Council, to ensure that the changes can come into effect by 16 May 2022 for the Pacific;
- 12 **noted** that a waiver of the 28-day rule will be sought for the above regulation changes, as they will be only beneficial.

Diana Hawker
for Secretary of the Cabinet