

Submitter information

Please provide your name and phone number, and preferred email address for contact if it is different from the one used to send this form:

§ 9(2)(g)(i) [REDACTED] Public Services Manager, Hurunui District Council

9(2)(a) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

In what capacity are you providing feedback?

e.g. on behalf of: your company, the company you work for, an industry organisation, a union, a licensed immigration adviser etc.

On behalf of the Hurunui District Council

If you are representing a company or group, what is the name of that group?

Hurunui District Council

What industry or industries does that group work in?

Local government. The Hurunui District is rural with many small villages/towns to support with agriculture being the primary industry.

In your company or industry, what are the most common occupations for migrant workers?

Skilled workers in dairy, other farming and wine.

Unskilled and semi-skilled workers in tourism, retail and wine.

What visa categories are commonly used by those workers?

I.e. resident visa, Essential Skills work visa, Work-to-Residence work visa (under the Talent or Long Term Skill Shortage List categories), Post-Study work visa (open or employer assisted), open work visa.

Resident Visa, Essential Skills Work Visa, Work to Residence Work Visa.

Only answer the following questions if you directly employ migrant workers:

How many migrant workers do you currently employ? (Refer to the visa categories in the question above)

n/a

Have you supported an Essential Skills visa application for any of these workers?

n/a

Using wage or salary information to help determine skill level and access to Essential Skills migrants

Proposal 1: Introduction of remuneration thresholds to determine skill levels and associated visa conditions for Essential Skills visas

Consider the proposal of aligning the remuneration thresholds for the Essential Skills visa with the remuneration thresholds for the Skilled Migrant Category.

What impacts or implications do you foresee from defining lower, mid- and higher-skilled Essential Skills migrants in this way?

Give details of the occupations or sectors and wage or salary levels you are thinking of.

We support migrants being properly paid for New Zealand jobs to protect migrants from exploitation. This could result in higher rates of pay in some cases which might attract New Zealanders into jobs that migrants now fill.

Reinforcing the temporary nature of the Essential Skills visa and managing the settlement expectations of temporary migrants

Proposal 2a: Introduction of a maximum duration for lower-skilled Essential Skills migrants

Consider the option of a three years for a maximum duration for lower-skilled Essential Skills visas.

What impacts or implications do you foresee from the proposed maximum duration for lower-skilled Essential Skills visa holders?

Give details of the occupations and industries you are thinking of.

This is likely to result in negative consequences. Migrant workers are employed in the Hurunui (particularly in the Amuri area) because it is almost impossible to attract New Zealanders into jobs on farms, especially dairy. The Hurunui district boasts a very low rate of unemployment (1.9%) which equates to few people given the population is only 12,500. Needless to say, the very few unemployed are rarely suited to working in these industries. We have evidence of some businesses finding it difficult, if not impossible to expand because they cannot find the workers needed to do so. The short term nature of three year periods could be detrimental to progress and continuity for businesses because of the need to retrain migrants regularly. This is also likely to deter migrants from bringing families with them which could lead to increased numbers of solo men on their own. This brings about social problems, and adversely impacts on small communities. Local businesses benefit through having families living in the locality. Populations are also sustained when families stick together and immerse into the wider community. Eg; children at local schools, and families participating in church, sport and club activities as they do now.

The Hurunui welcome migrant families and there has been a substantial amount of commitment made by individuals and groups to ensure that migrants are treated well and feel that New Zealand is their home.

Proposal 2b: Introduction of stand down period for lower-skilled Essential Skills

migrants

Consider the option for a year-long stand down period following the maximum duration for lower-skilled Essential Skills visas.

What impacts or implications do you foresee from these proposed changes?

Give details of the occupations and industries you are thinking of.

We consider this to be detrimental to individuals, communities and businesses. This would result in a constant churn of migrant workers which adds to the cost for businesses and disruption for business continuity, employee satisfaction (migrants and NZ employees). In rural communities, this would be exacerbated due to distance and isolation.

Proposal 3: Require the partners of lower-skilled Essential Skills visa holders to meet the requirements for a visa in their own right

Consider the proposal to require the partners of lower-skilled Essential Skills visa holders to meet the requirements for a visa in their own right.

What impacts or implications do you foresee from these proposed changes?

Give details of the occupations and industries you are thinking of.

We are concerned about this proposal and fear that the negative consequences outweigh what the proposal is trying to solve.

It impacts the ability of visa holders to bring their families with them. As well as being a disincentive for workers to come to New Zealand it would increase the number of single workers in rural areas. Migrant families are an essential component of small rural areas and single workers are far less likely to become involved in the local community.

There may also be implications for migrant families if visas are approved at different times. Also, there is often work for the migrants' families as well. This helps migrants find their way in New Zealand and integrate with others and reduce isolation and other social, mental and health issues. Isolation of newcomers into rural areas is a real problem and we our communities have worked hard to try to mitigate this happening.

Proposal 4: Require the children of lower-skilled Essential Skills visa holders to meet the requirements for a visa in their own right

Consider the proposal to require the children of lower-skilled Essential Skills visa holders to meet the requirements for a visa in their own right.

What impacts or implications do you foresee from these proposed changes?

Give details of the occupations and industries you are thinking of.

This proposal is a concern.

It would impact heavily on families being able to work in New Zealand. This would become a hurdle for employers to overcome to be able to bring families. Communities would be impacted on if migrants are unable to bring children, particularly if they come and leave their children behind. It just does not make sense to have rules that cause negative disruption and the disintegration of families. We would lose the benefits of having families settle in our townships and communities, and in some cases, contribute to a population decline.

Reinforce that Essential Skills visas should only be granted for the period for which the employment is offered

Proposal 5: Make it explicit how the 'period of employment' condition applies to seasonal work

Consider the option to reinforce that Essential Skills visas for seasonal work are only for the length of the season and that the offer of employment must match the length of the season.

What impacts or implications do you foresee from these options?

Give details of the occupations or sectors you think are likely to be affected.

We have no concerns with this proposal.

Consider the list of seasonal occupations being considered.

Are there any seasonal occupations that should be added or removed from this list? Why?

Consider the list of seasonal occupations being considered.

If you employ seasonal staff, or represent a sector with seasonal staff:

- What are the occupations of the seasonal staff within the sector that you are commenting on?
- For each of the occupations that you have identified, what is the typical period that you require seasonal staff to cover (e.g the peak of the season)?