

Our background - Introduction

We are migrants that became citizenships through the Essential Skills pathway in 2005. We share milk on a 1600 cow operation in North Canterbury. We are very thankful of being able to raise our 7 children in this country that is well and truly fantastic in many ways. It is our (all of us) duty to keep it this way!!!!

We believe immigration policies are extremely important for any nation let alone New Zealand. New Zealand has developed to be a land blessed by nature, populated by many extraordinary honest and hardworking man and women, and therefore the place where many around the globe would love to live.

New Zealand needs to get immigration policies right so this nation continues to honor the efforts and legacy of previous generations of kiwis.

Immigration and Dairy Industry

There is a clear and obvious shortage of staff in the dairy industry. There is a few elements to it, but basically:

- 1- The industry cannot offer as many career pathways to farm ownership as it used to, and this eliminates one of the big drivers for capable, hardworking individuals to be seduced into the industry.
- 2- The rural location, the Monday to Monday nature of milk production, the 4 o'clock starts to a working day, and the fewer non-working weekend days, have progressively pushed dairy farming outside most people comfort zone and out of there acceptable living standards.

And here is how immigration provides a huge answer. Most migrants come to New Zealand with very clear goals and resolutions and substantial different expectations in terms of living standards. They are here to work, provide for their families, learn new skills and further their career in an industry they have chosen, and in some cases, to do all there is in their hands to achieve residency.

This has become a huge win-win situation to our own business. We have been delighted to employ many willing migrants, doing their best day in day out, absolutely pushing themselves to learn new things, develop new skills and improve their language. Coaching them through this process is a very rewarding and fulfilling task to us. We are working side by side with highly motivated individuals that have a huge amount of ownership of what they do and what the business needs for them. We have encouraged and financially supported their English language learning as well as promoting their community involvement.

PROPOSAL 1:

Our business relies hugely on work visa holders. Most of them progress from unexperienced to mid-level position within a year, as we put an enormous amount of effort and time on training them and most importantly immerse them in our business culture.

The ANZSCO system becomes a huge challenge when it comes to defining where dairy farmers stand along their career. In our view, it is extremely inadequate to define roles and skills needed by dairy farm staff.

The visa length of upto 1 year for a migrant starting his career and therefore lacking NZ experience and training will put a great amount of a uncertainty to his future and to our business when we know for a

fact that the shortage is chronic and this situation has no chances of improving even if we try to hold immigration back. We need a minimum of 3 years to train these people to evolve them to the point they acquire a great deal of skills to benefit themselves, the community and the dairy industry. These of course will be reflected on their salaries, so we believe there should be a salary threshold.

Are we going to be able to attract the right caliber of people under the proposed visa conditions, as we were attracted 15 years ago? We doubt it. Most likely not.

PROPOSAL 2a and 2b:

Under the 3 x 1 year renewable visa, what kind of assurance we will be given the second and third visa will not be declined? What would be the steps to get it renewed? We are currently going through a very tedious and expensive process to advertise once and again these positions, going through the different steps of market test to be able to submit a visa renewal for a staff that we have already trained, is developing many skills day to day, has proven his attitude and has learned hundreds of different peculiarities around the farm and the equipment he operates with day to day. It will be a serious threaten to our business to have to start from scratch again and again. This is almost absurd.

We disagree with the statement that *"...three years provides this balance and also provides employers with sufficient time to recruit new staff or upskill existing staff to fill the role."* There is no local availability of local staff to be recruited, there is just no one out there that want these positions.

I would like to think that in conjunction with dairy industry representatives, Immigration NZ can develop a way to evaluate these migrants after 3 years in New Zealand to tell whether they are worth keeping here or not really, whether they have done enough to be able to stay for longer and attain permanent residency or not. However, the process to evaluate them after 3 years should be fair, strict and thorough.

We do not agree with the proposal of giving a one-off way pathway to residency to some work visa holders in the South Island. Being well exposed to many of these migrants, it becomes clear that many of them have not done quite enough to deserve permanent residency. A couple of ideas here: evaluate a) their English language ability, b) what have they done to improve it, c) their involvement in the communities they live and their efforts to integrate, d) and what formal training have they done on the industries they are part of. **Have they done anything else than good for themselves and a bit for their employers?** If you were to collect this evidence it would become clear that many migrants have done little to nothing to be part of this country and bring value to it, even after 5, 6 or 7 years of work visas.

I would suggest you reconsider the temporary nature of work visas, if individuals cannot prove themselves worthy of residence, **but** they still fulfill requirements to get a work visa for an industry that has a chronic shortage, they should be able to get another work visa, nothing more than that.

I take exception of people putting the blame on Immigration NZ around work visa holders not being able to get residency. If there is a proper system in place and these migrants haven't fulfilled the requirements, then we know what the outcome will be and good on them Immigration NZ for doing the job to the best of your ability.

PROPOSAL 3 and 4:

This will seriously compromise our ability to recruit the right people. I challenge you think this for yourself, would you leave family for up to 3 year with little or nothing being promised in terms of whether this could help your long-term goals and career development?

We need to give these people the ability to prove themselves before shooting them down before that. The thoroughness and fairness of the residency pathway system should be able to tell candidates apart after 3 years, but please do not discourage the right people to choose New Zealand, we need them.

Also for non-English speaking migrants the current "open" work visa for partners provides huge benefits for several industries needing seasonal staff and gives them a huge opportunity for them to learn the language which is the very first step to integrate to their communities.

The dairy industry by and large provides accommodation on farm which allows migrant to bring their families and be happy with family around them without adding extra pressure to the national struggle for accommodation.

PROPOSAL 5:

The shortage in the dairy industry is around genuine all year-round stable dairy farm staff. We don't believe dairy farming industry should be included as a seasonal occupation one. Of course, there is some extra work around calving time. This is normally address with permanent staff working longer hours, work visa holders partners work and working holiday visa holders, but I insist regardless of these the lack is on permanent staff.

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Santa Maria Dairies Ltd

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