



COVERSHEET

Minister	Hon Andrew Little	Portfolio	Immigration
Title of Cabinet paper	Cyclone Response: Immigration options	Date to be published	10 November 2023

List of documents that have been proactively released		
Date	Title	Author
August 2023	Cyclone Response: Immigration options	Office of the Minister of Immigration
16 August 2023	Cyclone Response: Immigration options DEV-23-MIN-0171 Minute	Cabinet Office
17 February 2023	Cyclone Response Workforce Demands and Potential Immigration Responses	Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment
17 February 2023	Immigration response to Cyclone Gabrielle – supporting A3	Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment
21 February 2023	Immigration options to support the response to the early 2023 extreme weather events	Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment
24 March 2023	Aide Memoire - Recovery Visa	Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment
20 April 2023	Next steps for the Recovery Visa	Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment
5 May 2023	Update on Cyclone Response Immigration Options	Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment
31 May 2023	Draft Cabinet paper: Cyclone Response – Immigration options	Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment
9 August 2023	Material to support your item at Economic Development Committee on 16 August: Cyclone response – Immigration options	Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment

Information redacted

YES / NO (please select)

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 to maintain the privacy of natural persons and to protect the free and frank expression of opinions.



AIDE MEMOIRE

Recovery visa update

Date:	24 March 2023	Priority:	Medium
Security classification:	In Confidence	Tracking number:	2223-3085

Information for Minister

Hon Michael Woods
Minister of Immigration

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)

Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Simon Sanders	Chief Operating Officer (Acting)	Privacy of natural persons	✓

The following departments/agencies have been consulted

N/A

Minister's office to complete:

Approved

Declined

Noted

Needs change

Seen

Overtaken by Events

See Minister's Notes

Withdrawn

Comments



AIDE MEMOIRE

Title

Date:	24 March 2023	Priority:	Medium
Security classification:	In Confidence	Tracking number:	2223-3085

Purpose

This aide memoire provides an overview of processing of recovery visa applications since the new sub-category opened on 24 February 2023. It also outlines the issues we are seeing in the applications received. Officials recommend forwarding this aide memoire to the Extreme Weather Recovery Ministers.

Privacy of natural persons

pp.

Simon Sanders
Chief Operating Officer (Acting)
Immigration New Zealand, MBIE
24 March 2023

Background

1. The recovery visa was established on 24 February to help bring in the additional specialist workers needed to support rebuild efforts in the wake of cyclone Gabrielle and Auckland flooding.
2. Recovery visa applications are prioritised by Immigration New Zealand (INZ) with the aim of finalising applications within seven calendar days of receipt. The \$700.00 visa application fee is refunded to successful applicants.

Summary of recovery visa applications received

3. Since the recovery visa sub-category opened on 24 February 2023, INZ has received 726 applications. A detailed breakdown of these applications is attached to this briefing however, a summary is outlined below.

Nationalities

4. From these applications, three nationalities stand out above all others with a high number of applications. They are:
 - a. India with 245 applications (34 per cent),
 - b. China with 222 applications (31 per cent), and
 - c. Vietnam with 118 applications (16 per cent).
5. Following these three countries is the Philippines with 39 applications.
6. To date only 15 applications have been received for Pacific Island countries – 10 from Fiji and five from Tonga.

Occupations

7. The three occupations represented with the greatest number of applications are:
 - a. builder's labourer with 200 applications (28 per cent),
 - b. commercial cleaners with 67 applications (9 per cent), and
 - c. domestic cleaner with 57 applications (8 per cent).
8. Of the applications received, 416 (57 per cent) are from accredited employers and 309 are from non-accredited employers (43 per cent).
9. Of the applications already approved, 233 were from accredited employers and 193 applications were from non-accredited employers.

Processing and arrivals

10. Of the 726 applications received, 427 have been approved, 54 have been declined or withdrawn and 244 are currently being assessed.
11. Of the completed applications, 322 applications were approved within seven calendar days.
12. Eighty people have already arrived in New Zealand to date.

What are we seeing since this visa was established?

13. Prior to the establishment of the recovery visa, 66 applications were received and approved under specific purpose visa to support the recovery, with the majority of these being specialist roles such as insurance assessors. Since the establishment of the recovery visa, the makeup of applications has changed.
14. Most of the applications being received are for lower-skilled occupations such as labourers and cleaners. Trades roles such as carpenters are also represented. In many cases this may represent a genuine need for workers in these roles, but it also carries some risk particularly around bona fides as well as the fact that most of these applicants are unlikely to meet the threshold for AEWV.
15. Some applications received appear to be unrelated to the immediate clean-up and recovery e.g. one employer has listed the duties as “to meet ongoing work requirements and they might also undertake recovery work”. These applications are being declined.
16. There are also indications that some employers are attempting to use the recovery visa as a pathway to facilitate entry for workers who would not be eligible for the AEWV. These include:
 - a. employers with no relevant or genuine flood recovery work available, and
 - b. applicants with no knowledge that their job entailed any element of recovery work to support the clean-up and rebuilding of infrastructure.

Risk areas

17. As outlined, we are noticing some specific trends which raise concerns regarding the genuine nature of some applications. This is impacting the overall speed of processing. Some of these concerns include:
 - a. forty three per cent of employers supporting recovery visa applications are not accredited and 69 per cent of those employers have no previous history of employing migrants. Some of these businesses have only recently been established, and
 - b. around 80 per cent of all applications from both accredited and non-accredited employers include job offers where the pay being offered is below median wage, and
 - c. employers supporting applications where INZ holds adverse information which needs to be addressed. For example, where there is an identified risk of migrant exploitation, and
 - d. applicants without any employment history or applicants with mismatched work experience and/or qualifications in their home countries.
18. Most applications where there are concerns about the recovery aspect of the role (or where there are concerns about the employer) are being queried with the employer through the formal potentially prejudicial information (PPI) process.
19. Where there is a connection to recovery and no concerns are identified, lower-skilled roles being paid below median wage are being approved.

Mitigations

20. The six-month duration of the recovery visa mitigates some of the risk of the recovery visa becoming an enduring pathway for applicants who would not meet instructions for AEWV.

Labourers and other roles that do not meet the construction sector agreement for AEWV threshold will need to depart at the end of their visa.

21. A better assessment of the ongoing need for a lower-skilled workforce and whether this cannot be supplied through AEWV will inform any approach to transitioning these workers to longer term roles as more information becomes available on sector and workforce requirements related to the recovery.
22. INZ will be contacting visa holders to remind them that they need to apply for an AEWV to stay in New Zealand longer term to support ongoing recovery work or look to depart in line with their visa conditions.

Approach to visa processing and timeliness

23. INZ aims to process recovery visa applications within seven days. There are, however, a number of factors that mean some decisions are taking longer. These include:
 - a. work that does not appear to be linked to the recovery,
 - b. issues with employers, and
 - c. the recovery visa being used to facilitate entry for lower-skilled and lower-paid migrant workers to enter New Zealand.
24. INZ initially took a facilitative approach by giving applicants and employers a chance to address any concerns INZ has through conducting verification and requesting information through the PPI process rather than declining applications outright. These applications could not be decided within seven days.
25. As previously advised, INZ has reconsidered the approach to processing recovery visas and is now assessing and deciding applications based on the information provided wherever possible, with quick verification checks conducted in some cases.
26. It is likely that this approach will lead to an increase in applications being declined where applications do not meet instructions and INZ will not be pursuing applicants for further information to fill in the gaps and mitigate risks. However, this change in approach will also lead to faster processing for the applications that genuinely meet the policy intent as well as discouraging mala fide actors from attempting to exploit this visa category. The number of applications in progress has dropped already as a result of the change in approach.
27. INZ has made a number of additional changes to bring recovery visa processing back in line with the seven-day timeframe. NSC checks are being prioritised and weekend overtime is in place to minimise the amount of time between receipt, lodgement and allocation of an application to an immigration officer.
28. As of 23 March, 70 per cent of applications completed were decided within seven calendar days. This timeliness measure is expected to worsen in the short-term as the applications assessed prior to the change in approach that already exceed the seven-day timeframe are decided. However, INZ is confident that the number of applications decided within seven calendar days will increase progressively from there.

Policy advice

29. MBIE is continuing to work with other agencies to assess the workforce needs. Advice on further immigration changes will follow if a case emerges that further action will be needed to support the recovery workforce needs

Annexes

Annex One: Recovery visa – nationalities

Annex Two: Recovery visa – occupations

Annex Three: Recovery visa – applications approved, declined and in progress

Annex Four: Recovery visa – processing times for completed applications

Annex Five: Recovery visa – age of 'in progress' applications

Annex One: Recovery visa - nationalities

Nationality	Total Received
Argentina	Priv
Bangladesh	13
Barbados	Priv
Canada	Priv
China	222
Fiji	10
France	Priv
Great Britain	17
India	245
Indonesia	11
Ireland	Priv
Malaysia	Priv
Nepal	6
Nigeria	Priv
Pakistan	Priv
Philippines	39
Russia	Priv
Singapore	Priv
South Africa	6
South Korea	Priv
Sri Lanka	Priv
Sudan	Priv
Taiwan	Priv
Thailand	Priv
Tonga	5
Turkey	Priv
United States of America	Priv
Vietnam	118
Zimbabwe	Priv
	726

Annex Two: Recovery visa – occupations

Occupation	Total Received
Agricultural and Horticultural Mobile Plant Operator	
Airconditioning and Refrigeration Mechanic	
Arborist	
Baking Factory Worker	
Builder's Labourer	200
Car Detailer	
Carpenter	39
Carpenter and Joiner	
Civil Engineer	
Civil Engineering Technician	
Cleaners nec	8
Commercial Cleaner	67
Construction Project Manager	
Corporate General Manager	
Corporate Services Manager	
Crop Farmers nec	
Delivery Driver	
Domestic Cleaner	57
Drainer (Aus) / Drainlayer (NZ)	
Earthmoving Labourer	5
Electrical Engineer	
Electrical or Telecommunications Trades Assistant	
Electrician (General)	
Farm, Forestry and Garden Workers nec	14
Fencer	18
Fitter-Welder	
Floor Finisher	
Fruit or Nut Farm Worker	
Garden Labourer	
Handyperson	34
Insurance Loss Adjuster	13
Labourers nec	46
Machine Operators nec	5
Mixed Crop Farmer	
Occupational Health and Safety Adviser	
Painting Trades Worker	21

Paving and Surfacing Labourer	9
Plumber (General)	Priv
Plumber's Assistant	Priv
Project Builder	Priv
Road Roller Operator	Priv
Road Traffic Controller	7
Scaffolder	Priv
Solid Plasterer	Priv
Steel Fixer	8
Technicians and Trades Workers nec	10
Truck Driver (General)	9
Truck Driver's Offsider	9
University Lecturer	Priv
Wall and Floor Tiler	5
Welder (First Class) (Aus) / Welder (NZ)	Priv
Wood and Wood Products Factory Worker	Priv
Not yet recorded	92
	726

Annex Three: Recovery visa – applications approved, declined and in progress

	Received	Approved	Declined/Withdrawn	In progress
Accredited Employer	416	310	25	158
Non-Accredited Employer	309	193	30	86
Total	726	427	54	244

Annex Four: Recovery visa – processing times for completed applications

0-5 Days	6-7 Days	8-9 Days	10+ Days
71.37%	16.60%	7.26%	4.56%

Annex Five: Recovery visa – age of 'in progress' applications

0-5 Days	6-7 Days	8-9 Days	10+ Days
72.95%	8.20%	9.84%	9.02%