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[www.laneneaveimmigration.co.nz](http://www.laneneaveimmigration.co.nz)

## **When Can A South Island Contribution Work Visa Be Granted as an Exception to The Rules?**

Long term migrant workers in the South Island may already be aware of the significant announcement this year by the Minister of Immigration introducing the South Island Contribution Work Visa policy. The introduction of this policy provides an avenue for migrant workers employed in the South Island to be granted work visas which would put them on a pathway to residence. The intent of this policy is to provide relief to certain lower skilled migrant workers, who are not able to qualify for New Zealand residence under any of the existing residence policies, but have been living and working in the South Island for a significant period of time.

Successful applicants under this policy are normally required to prove that they have undertaken full-time employment in the South Island as the holder of Essential Skills work visas from 22 May 2012 to 22 May 2017. However, if they are not able to meet this requirement INZ does have discretion to issue a visa as an exception to the standard rules if they are considered to be marginally short of the requirement. The issue however, is that this term has not been defined.

Lane Neave has been making enquiries to better understand what Immigration New Zealand (INZ) may consider to be marginally short, and what factors it may take into consideration when deciding whether or not to exercise its discretion and grant a visa as an exception.

The information we have obtained provides some clear guidelines as to what INZ expect in order to conclude that there are exceptional circumstances which support INZ exercising its discretion to issue the visa.



Mid and lower skilled work visa holders in the South Island may wish to obtain an opinion from us to consider whether they would be eligible to make an application under this new policy if they are not able to prove the full 5-year visa requirement.

Lane Neave is already handling a significant number of these more complicated applications, and therefore we are in an informed position to provide advice regarding eligibility under the new policy for people who can't meet the standard requirements.

## **Changes to Skilled Migrant Category Residence Applications Delayed**

Potential Skilled Migrant applicants should note a recent announcement regarding the upcoming changes to the Skilled Migrant Category (SMC). INZ recently announced that the changes to the SMC which were due to be introduced on 14 August 2017 have been delayed, and will now be implemented on 28 August.

On a final point, please also note that 19 July was the final date for Expressions of Interest to be submitted to the SMC Pool for consideration and invitation under the current (old) rules, although that was based on an implementation date of 14 August, so for those who have missed that July date there may well be a chance to file now given the new implementation date. This, however, will need to be confirmed by INZ prior to submission.

**For further information or assistance with emigration please contact the Lane Neave on + 64 3 379 3720 or email [liveinnewzealand@laneneave.co.nz](mailto:liveinnewzealand@laneneave.co.nz).**



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## **Kiwi Customs and Social Behaviour**

Understanding and adjusting to differing cultural customs and social behaviour can be a challenge for newcomers settling into any country, and New Zealand is no exception. Even those who come from similar cultural backgrounds sometimes struggle to adjust to Kiwi customs.

Socialising forms a big part of Kiwi culture. Social gatherings, as in other cultures, often centre around food; a summer bbq, a 'pot-luck' meal (when everyone brings a different dish to share), a meal out at a restaurant, or - if you're very lucky - a hāngi (traditional Maori food cooked in the ground). If invited to a party and asked to 'bring



a plate', this means to bring some food for sharing– not just the empty plate. Many migrants get caught out by this common colloquialism. Kiwis can be relaxed about invitations to events and may turn up late, unless a time is specified.

There is a strong 'cafe culture' in New Zealand and these are frequent meeting places for friends, family, and even business meetings. The 'flat white' is the preferred coffee choice of Kiwis, although tea is a common domestic alternative. While New Zealand does have an alcohol drinking culture, there is no pressure to drink, and strict drink-driving levels have led many people to limit their alcohol intake when socialising. Smoking is becoming less common in New Zealand due to high taxes imposed on cigarettes and strong government-led education programmes. It is prohibited in most indoor public spaces, including bars and restaurants.

In the workplace, morning tea 'shouts' are frequent events. This is when the person celebrating a birthday or other significant event brings morning tea to share. Friday drinks (sometimes supplied by the employer) are also common, and although not compulsory, they provide a great chance for workmates to relax and chat about things other than work. Newcomers often find this opportunity for 'small talk' invaluable.

It is the subtle differences in cultural behaviour in the workplace however, that can often be the hardest for newcomers to grasp. New Zealanders' laid-back, give-it-a-go attitude can clash with some cultures' style of working. Everyone is expected to 'muck-in' and contribute to ideas and activities. Thinking 'outside the square' and showing initiative is considered a positive trait, unlike in some cultures where roles at work can be very narrowly-focused. New Zealand is an egalitarian society and this shapes behaviour in the workplace, such as addressing the boss by his or her first name, or skipping hierarchical lines to address a workplace issue. Kiwis also dislike putting people on a pedestal or bragging about achievements. This can be difficult to adjust to for new migrants who come from cultures where success is openly, loudly and confidently celebrated.

If unsure about any Kiwi customs or behaviour, ask a 'local'. New Zealanders are friendly, approachable and well-travelled so they understand that Kiwi culture can be baffling at times. Understanding and adjusting to the way New Zealanders approach work and life will help with successful settlement for any newcomer.

**Lisa Burdes is the Skilled Migrant Business Advisor at the Canterbury Employers' Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber offers free settlement support and resources to employers of migrants in Canterbury.**

**This service is fully funded by Immigration New Zealand (INZ). If you have questions about living and working in New Zealand, you can visit <http://www.newzealandnow.govt.nz>, email your query to [newmigrantinfo@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:newmigrantinfo@mbie.govt.nz) or ring the INZ Contact Centre on +64 9 914 4100.**





## **Government may reconsider stance on proposed changes**

It appears as if common sense may prevail with recent news suggesting the Government may well reconsider their well-publicised immigration rule changes.

The lobbying of various groups has fortunately been worthwhile in this regard. The Canterbury Mayoral Forum recently asked the government to reconsider their stance around the proposed changes.

They reassured the government there were not enough kiwis to fill jobs in the Canterbury regions businesses. They projected Canterbury needed about 106,000 migrants over the next 15 years, or about 6600 people yearly, which was similar to post-earthquake levels and well above historic levels of 3500 a year. It said the ageing population and employment growth continues to drive demand for workers in the region.

This underpins the fact that the Canterbury economy is growing and not reliant on the earthquake rebuild alone.

Enterprise Recruitment & People still require quality tradespeople to assist with the infrastructure projects throughout the country.

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**Bank of New Zealand**

## **Strong demand for employees**

If someone is shifting country then chances are the prospect of a job at the other end is of topmost importance. In that regard the indicators for New Zealand have been attractive for the past three to four years and look like remaining so in the future. In fact, demand for employees in New Zealand is so strong that after receiving feedback from employers the government has decided not to introduce new rules restricting low skilled migrants and the path to residency for those earning low wages.

The starting point for getting a feel for the state of the labour market is always employment growth and the unemployment rate. In New Zealand job numbers have rise by about 4.5% over the past year and since 2009 373,000 jobs have been created with over 80% full-time. The unemployment rate is 4.9% compared with 6.1% in 2009 and a peak of 6.7% in 2012.

That unemployment rate is actually higher than in a number of other countries, including the United States. But that is because the strength of the New Zealand labour market has attracted a lot of people to put their hands up saying they are looking for a job, thus getting themselves officially classified as unemployed.

If we look at the employment rate, which is the proportion of people aged over 65 actually working, we find a jump to a record 67.1% now from 63.4% in 2009 and a peak of 66.1% in 2007.

But what does the future hold – especially given that actual job growth tends to lag behind changes in the overall economy. A quarterly survey from the NZIER showed recently that a net 47% of employers say it is hard to get skilled people. The average reading is 19% and this is the highest degree of shortage since 2005. A net 23% say they can't get unskilled people. The average is a net 6% finding it easy.

In fact, a gross 22% of businesses say that the main reason they cannot grow is lack of staff. This is well above the average reading of 11% and the highest outcome since 2008. New Zealand's labour market is officially tight.

Businesses are struggling to source staff and that means they are very open to the idea of hiring migrants, whilst at the same time trying to upskill existing staff and improve efficiency by investing in new systems and technologies – or shifting production offshore.



However, there is a general election to be held on September 23 and anti-immigrant party NZ First is highly likely to hold the balance of power. It seems very probable that they will demand tighter immigration rules as a condition of their support for either National or Labour. Comments from the NZ First leader indicate drastic cutbacks are being sought. But what actually comes out of coalition negotiations is anyone's guess.

With regard to sectors driving the economy forward we have almost all the primary sectors, excluding wool. That is, there is good growth and therefore labour demand stretching across dairy, sheep and beef, horticulture, and forestry. The construction sector has a dire shortage of workers. Tourism is booming and along with it demand for hospitality workers.

There is also strong growth in the broadly defined technology sector ranging from data analysts to system programmers and machine technicians.

Is there anything on the horizon which could drastically change things? Barring an outbreak of war the traditional growth killer of soaring inflation and soaring interest rates is simply not happening and does not look likely to happen in a world where low inflation seems locked in.

**Tony Alexander, Chief Economist, Bank of New Zealand**

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