

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:

s 9(2)(g)(i), s 9(2)(a)

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 our company, Pukeko Pastures, a sharemilking company employing migrant labour in the dairy sector

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

Pukeko Pastures Ltd

What industry or industries does that group work in?

Dairy farming

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

Dairy farm employees – ranging from Farm Assistant, Assistant Herd Manager, Herd Manager, Assistant Farm Manager (2IC), Farm Manager

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.

Essential Skills 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)

1

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

Yes

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.

I agree with the introduction of salaries as part of the assessment process for migrants applying to work in the NZ dairy sector. I believe that is part of a true market assessment of their skills base as farmers are not willing to pay over the odds for skills that people do not have. This also allows for greater recognition of the various skill levels in the dairy industry that the ANZSCO thresholds do not seem to recognise.

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.

In our sharemilking business, this would mean there is a lack of incentive for us to invest in training and development of that individual whose time is limited in our business. As responsible employers, we try to advance the skills of all the people who work in our business, but with a time limit and no ability to move "up the ladder" what would be the point in investing in those workers? In turn this would make our business less productive and all our employees less satisfied and energised. At worst, this could lead to a systematic separation between Kiwi workers and migrant workers in the same workplace. I see a tension between our role as employers and our role in employing migrant labour. At the current time, no distinction is made between those roles.

The most motivated and contributing workers we have had in our time operating have been those who see a pathway to bettering themselves and their skill set, whether migrant or NZ resident. Setting a maximum duration for lower-skilled workers is stopping them from having the time to develop themselves and work their way into the higher-skilled bracket.

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.

In the 6 years our sharemilking business has been employing people, we have seen a constant shortage of lower skilled workers to enter into dairy farming as a career. We advertise for positions and rarely, if ever, receive a Kiwi applicant. This year long stand down period would mean for our business that we could recruit someone, train them and embed them in our business and our operation, and then they are forced to leave with all their institutional knowledge of our operation, and we would, in all likelihood, be recruiting another migrant to replace them.

Until there is a plan in place to generate Kiwi workers to fill these places, this seems like an exercise in penalising the people who want to come and work hard, and contribute to our economy and our communities.

The Dairy Industry does need to do their bit to make our workplaces and careers attractive to lower-skilled New Zealanders, but without a plan of support by the government or some dramatic change, I cannot see a surplus of non-migrant labour waiting for those positions we have to offer.

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.

In the dairy sector, this will have the effect of splitting families and mostly male workers will come to NZ and leave their families at home. This means their own mental and emotional health will be affected, making for a less happy and less productive workforce. The isolating nature of rural positions in our sector mean that the impact of denying visas to partners and children falls more onto the partner working in NZ. The burden for the mental health care of affected migrant workers would outweigh the positive benefits that a partner and children can provide.

In addition, it is those partners and children who offer diversity and numbers to our local community and schools, in many ways making the sports teams and schools more viable with their presence.

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.

The impact of this change on migrant dairy workers would be to effectively exclude their children from their life in NZ as no dairy farm worker (or sharemilker!) is paid enough to afford the international school fees for their children. The exclusion of those children takes away some of the diversity of experience and culture from rural schools. My own children attend Lauriston School alongside a mix of locally born Kiwi kids, Kiwi kids who have moved from other parts of NZ, and migrant children or children of migrants born in NZ. These migrants include Filipino, Sri Lankan, Pacific Island, Irish and British families. Those children teach my children about different languages, culture and ideas. They also provide numbers to make school sports teams and the school itself viable in numbers of teachers and resources.

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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.

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)?**

In my view, dairy farming is not a seasonal occupation.