



Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
via online submission:

May 19 2017

RE: SUITE OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ESSENTIAL SKILLS VISA: DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

Business Central represents business interests throughout central New Zealand from Taranaki across to Gisborne and down to Nelson. Business Central is one of the four regional organisations comprising New Zealand's peak business advocacy group, BusinessNZ. In Wellington, our organisation operates the Wellington Chamber of Commerce, accredited to the New Zealand Chamber of Commerce network. Our organisation also delivers ExportNZ to Wellington and the Hawke's Bay.

Business Central supports BusinessNZ's submission to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and endorses BusinessNZ's comments.

As with BusinessNZ, we support in principle what MBIE is trying to achieve, namely an Essential Skills policy that continues to enable employers to use low-skilled migrants where there is a genuine need, maintain the integrity of temporary migration by ensuring settlement expectations are clear for Essential Skills migrants, make it easier for employers to recruit higher skilled and higher paid migrant workers and for those migrants to stay on in NZ, increase the attractiveness for employers of employing and training New Zealand workers before recruiting migrant labour, and contribute to a better alignment between immigration, welfare and education settings.

We are pleased that MBIE has noted low-skilled migration is concentrated in particular industries and areas of New Zealand. These industries tend to be labour intensive and require people to perform specific tasks. Their uneven distribution means the impact of the proposed changes is likely to be experienced differently by industries and sectors of the economy.

We know of many agricultural businesses within our remit who rely heavily on low-skilled workers during harvest season and have struggled to employ enough workers to carry out their work. This has particularly impacted areas such as the Hawke's Bay where apple pickers were in short supply.

Additionally, through the Wellington Chamber of Commerce, we deliver the Skilled Newcomers programme specifically targeting the challenge our employer network faces in connecting with and recruiting skilled talent. Since July 2016 we worked with 285 migrant job seekers through the programme and while they are predominantly of a high-skill background, we do see a number of low-skilled migrants vying for employment opportunities in areas that we know there are New Zealanders to do the work. We believe these changes positively address this shortcoming and continue to support the needs of business in terms of connecting with the workers they need to run and grow their business.

As analysed by BusinessNZ, Business Central recognises that trying to identify the scale of the problem is difficult. But as with BusinessNZ, we believe it will be necessary to look at the broader policy settings across all migration policies with a work focus to ensure consistency. Accordingly, Business Central supports the recommendations of BusinessNZ.

Yours sincerely,

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9(2)(a)

Chief Executive, Business Central