

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.

Industry association

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

Home and Community Health Association

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What industry or industries does that group work in?

Home and community health and disability support services for New Zealanders needing support to remain independently at home, includes those living with , disability, injury or medical related conditions. 110,000 clients nationally.

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

Personal care support, nursing

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.

A range of visa categories. Some migrant nurses. Others may be working on post-study work visas. Some may be on an open work visa. Some on the work-to-residence visa. Some on the 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)

This has not been counted in our sector and it is important to note that employment of temporary and permanent migrants varies considerably from one provider to another, depending on geography and client mix, and also for some, cultural components. Regions where temporary migrant use is anecdotally higher is Auckland, Waikato, Wellington and Christchurch. Some employers source workers from culturally diverse backgrounds in order to meet the growing demands of aging immigrant communities. For example older Pacific, Indian and Muslim clients have better wellbeing if they are supported by workers who can speak their language or empathise with their general or specific cultural needs. There are a few home support employing organisations which employ large numbers of migrant workers, eg from Tonga and other Pacific nations, post student workers broadly across Auckland, and a broad range of workers in Christchurch.

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

I regret to say we can only provide anecdotal information from our members, and the short time frame and massive other workload currently with travel time, guaranteed hours and pay equity have already diverted employers from their core tasks.

As general comments we would comment that:

- it has been difficult in the past for employers to recruit workers on this sort of visa application because of the requirement (we understand) for the worker to have guaranteed hours of work. Also employees need to have a car and a current drivers licence, and have a reasonable level of English literacy and numeracy. Our sector, therefore, probably does not rely on the essential skills visa category at any levels similar to aged residential care. However, all employers are hoping to source migrant workers in the future, as one pool amongst several.

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.

It is not clear why the term higher skilled is being used for employees who may have an ANZSCO qualification, whereas for those labelled 'medium skilled' and 'low skilled' qualifications are specified. Would it not be more accurate to categorise by wage rate categories or threshold, since this appears to be what the main benchmark is.

Related to that point, the care and support workforce has been defined as 'low skilled' which has been challenged in court as a symptom of gender bias and not an actual feature of the work.

We think that the use of these terms may embed perceptions of bias against workforces that receive low pay disproportionate to other workforces on the basis of gender bias rather than a judgement of what constitutes 'skill'.

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 summary, we think that the changes may reduce the available labour supply for home support. We think it may dissuade employers from taking on temporary migrants who may not stay, or may not be stable. That is a problem, because we need more workers, not fewer. We do not believe there is sufficient labour supply in the current or future New Zealand market to meet the need, even with the current initiatives.

We acknowledge that there is much that is not known, and we are unable to survey or canvas our members. It is also true that our sector does not rely on migrant labour support to the extent that aged residential care does. But the demands on our workforce are likely to increase in depth and volume.

It is probable that in the short term, perhaps even out to 4-5 years the changes will not have an undue negative impact broadly, though they are likely to impact some providers quite severely.

Context for our sector.

* There are around 24,000 support workers in the home support sector, and a further few hundred nurses, also some service and administrative coordinators

* The workforce is aging, as evidenced in surveys. In the 2015 AUT workforce survey, the vast majority of home care respondents were clustered in the 45-64 age group, with the same number of employees in their 70s and 80s as those in their 20s and 30s..

* There is no known data on the numbers of temporary migrants. In terms of ethnicity, in the 2015 AUT workforce study, 30% identified as born overseas. The majority of those (36%) were born in the UK, followed by Pacific Islands (18%), Australia (10%), Phillipines (5%), Asia (other than Phillipines 8%.

* workforce shortages have been identified as severe in some areas, and there is a general serious workforce shortage across New Zealand

* this is exacerbated by high turnover (currently sitting at a weighted average of 18%, range 3-28%) (Quigley and Watts 2016 HCHA workforce survey)

* the workforce has traditionally been essentially casualised.

Over the last three years government funding and policy has focussed on the home support workforce in response to legal challenges from unions and general recognition that the workforce and sector needed to be stabilised. This has resulted in payment for time travelling between clients, and, from 1 April this year, guaranteed hours of work for almost all employees. In addition the recently announced pay equity settlement will raise wages substantially. Theoretically this should improve retention of current workers, and should make the service more attractive to a broader range of people. Up until this year, because of the poor wages and conditions, home support organisations have struggled to compete with residential services and many other jobs. WE have found that we train staff only to see them move across to another sector, often after we have invested in their training.

IT is too early to assess whether the changes are going to positively impact recruitment and retention.

We know that client numbers are increasing, and that the government wants to keep people at home for longer. So even if the current changes improve recruitment, the aging nature of our workforce is going to mean a significant proportion of the more stable part of our workforce will be retiring over the next 10-15 years.

High levels of job satisfaction are expressed by people who stay in home support, but it is clear it is not for everyone. Challenging parts of the job are: the lack of direct supervision, and need to operate independently; the changing nature of clients and services delivered; the ability to cope with client decline and death; the very frail nature of many of our clients (including those living with dementia, high levels of disability, imminent death, as well as the very personal nature of some of the tasks, such as bathing, toileting and feeding, and the physical nature of the work supporting people to move. Employees need to be professional, reliable, perceptive, reflective, mature, assertive and flexible. They need to be completely trustworthy and have a client centred approach. That works for some school leavers, though not all. It works for some young men, but not for a good deal of them. It does not always suit people changing careers or long term job seekers (though it works for some). It can work for some people struggling generally with employment, but not for most.

In summary, we need to attract workers from a range of places. We need workers who come already with qualifications or can learn quickly on the job, who are willing to support more people with increasing levels of disability and illness. We need more of a para professional workforce.

That may not answer your question.

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.

For home support it may decrease the likelihood of employers using this labour pool, or of people wanting to seek employment through this visa route.

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.

We think it will decrease the available labour pool. the people who work in home support are often from low paid families with precarious employment.

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.

We think it will decrease the available migrant labour pool. the people who work in home support are often women with families. We want to attract more of those workers

From a general policy point of view, HCHA supports the status quo in enabling families to accompany people on migrant visas. WE do not support policies that separate families.

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.

No comment

Consider the list of seasonal occupations being considered.

Are there any seasonal occupations that should be added or removed from this list? Why?

No comment

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)?

No comment

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