



BRIEFING

Parent Boost - further advice on outstanding issues

Date:	3 April 2025	Priority:	High
Security classification:	In Confidence	Tracking number:	REQ-0011920

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Erica Stanford Minister of Immigration	Agree which options to include in a revised draft Cabinet paper for Ministerial and agency consultation	7 April 2025

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)				
Name	Position	Telephone		1st contact
Polly Vowles	Manager, Immigration (Skills and Residence) Policy	04 978 3106	Privacy of natural persons	✓
Lee Gerrard	Principal Policy Advisor	04 830 7396		

The following departments/agencies have been consulted
The Treasury has been consulted on timing options

Minister's office to complete:

☐ Approved

☐ Declined

☐ Noted

☐ Needs change

☐ Seen

☐ Overtaken by Events

☐ See Minister's Notes

☐ Withdrawn

Comments



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Purpose

This briefing provides you with further advice on key outstanding issues for the design of a new long-term parent Visitor Visa (Parent Boost) and seeks decisions on which options to include in the draft Cabinet paper for Ministerial and agency consultation.

It also provides you with advice on timing to progress to Cabinet in the context of the Budget moratorium.

Executive summary

We previously provided you with a draft Cabinet paper for Ministerial and agency consultation alongside initial advice on making Parent Boost a limited visa and lowering the proposed income threshold for sponsors [REQ-0010961 refers]. This paper covers the advice provided to date and provides further advice on these matters, Confidential advice to Government

You also requested advice on requiring a period offshore during the five-year duration. Requiring time offshore within a five-year visa duration would more strongly signal the temporary nature of the visa, and reduce overstaying and de-facto settlement risks. However, this would be difficult to enforce and would increase the complexity of the visa. In this context, we have proposed an alternative option of an initial three-year duration with the ability to extend (from offshore) for a further two years. This would ensure that the visa holder has to leave New Zealand after three years and would also allow for another touch point with the system where key eligibility could be re-tested (e.g. health and insurance requirements) outside of a full visa application. This would, however, come at extra cost and effort for the visa applicant compared to a single five-year visa. Either option would support your objective but with some drawbacks.

On balance, we recommend:

- Not making Parent Boost a limited visa (in the context of legal professional privilege timing and other changes being progressed to reinforce the temporary nature of the visa) Confidential advice to Government
Confidential advice to Government
- Requiring sponsors to earn at least the median wage to sponsor parents (with the amount increasing by 0.5x the median wage per parent akin to Parent Category).
- Requiring parents to spend some time offshore rather than allowing a full five years onshore. While there are a number of possible approaches to achieving this, we recommend either:
 - allowing maximum stays of two years at a time up to a maximum total of four years onshore within the five-year visa duration, or

- allowing an initial three-year duration with the ability to extend (from offshore) for a further two years (which could be subject to still meeting health and insurance requirements).

Subject to your agreement, and further discussions with officials, we will provide you with a revised draft Cabinet paper for Ministerial and agency consultation. It is not possible to undertake full consultation and seek Cabinet decisions in April, we have therefore proposed an alternative timeframe which would seek Cabinet decisions in late May (ECO on 21 May and Cabinet on 26 May). While there are earlier Cabinet dates, Treasury advised us this proposal could not be considered during the Budget moratorium (14 April – 22 May). At this stage, Parent Boost could still be implemented in September with late May Cabinet decisions. However, we note delays in seeking policy decisions or broad changes to the settings as proposed may impact on our ability to implement by September.

Recommended actions

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment recommends that you:

- a **Agree** which options to include in the draft Cabinet paper for Ministerial and agency consultation:

- a. Make Parent Boost a Limited Visa (not recommended)

Agree / Disagree / Discuss

- b. The sponsors income requirement will:

- i. Align with requirements under the Parent Category Resident Visa (1.5x the current New Zealand median wage for a single sponsor (currently \$98,623.20 per annum) and 2x the current New Zealand median wage for joint sponsors (currently \$131,497.60 per annum) to support one parent which increases by half the New Zealand median wage for each additional parent)

Agree / Disagree / Discuss

OR

- ii. Starts at the median wage (currently \$69,804.80 per annum) and increases if sponsors wish to pool their funds and per parent

Agree / Disagree / Discuss

OR

- iii. Starts at 80% of the median wage (currently \$55,844 per annum) and increases if sponsors wish to pool their funds and per parent (not recommended)

Agree / Disagree / Discuss

- c. The duration of the visa will allow:
i. up to five years onshore

Agree / Disagree / Discuss

OR

- ii. up to four years onshore within the five-year visa duration with no more than two year stays at a time

Agree / Disagree / Discuss

OR

- iii. an initial three-year duration with the ability to 'extend' the visa for a further two years subject to continuing to meet health and insurance requirements

Agree / Disagree / Discuss

- b **Note** that Treasury advised that this proposal could not be considered by Cabinet during the Budget moratorium (14 April to 22 May), so officials recommend progressing to the Cabinet Economic Policy Committee (ECO) on 21 May and Cabinet on 26 May

Noted

- c **Note** that subject to your decisions in recommendation a, officials will provide you with a revised draft Cabinet paper for Ministerial and agency consultation.

Noted



Polly Vowles
**Manager, Immigration (Skills and Residence)
Policy**
Labour, Science and Enterprise, MBIE

Hon Erica Stanford
Minister of Immigration

03 / 04 / 2025


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Background

1. Following initial decisions [REQ-0010049 refers] and discussions with officials we provided you with a draft Cabinet paper seeking agreement to introduce a Parent Boost visa and its key parameters [REQ-0010961 refers]. The Cabinet paper as currently drafted seeks agreement to the following parameters:
 - The visa will enable multiple entries with a maximum stay onshore of up to five years at a time (discussed further below).
 - Parents can only access two Parent Boost visas and must apply offshore.
 - Applicants will be required to spend three months offshore prior to accessing a subsequent Parent Boost visa.
 - Parents will require an eligible sponsor (adult New Zealand citizen or resident) who needs to remain onshore while the parent visits and will be liable for any costs incurred by the government in relation to the visa holder during the visa duration.
 - Parents will be required to meet the Acceptable Standard of Health (ASH) for residence, meaning parents with named or costly pre-existing conditions will not be eligible.
 - Parents will be required to obtain and maintain health insurance which covers emergency medical cover (up to \$250,000), repatriation and return of remains.
 - Health insurance will need to be paid for a year in advance for the visa to be granted, with an ongoing visa condition to maintain health insurance while onshore. Those who received a Parent Boost will need to demonstrate they have met this condition in order to be eligible for a subsequent Parent Boost visa or residence under the Parent Category.
 - Applicants will be required to declare they understand the visa is temporary and unless they are granted residence, they will need to leave New Zealand.
 - Either the parent or sponsor would need to meet an income or sufficient funds requirement (discussed further below).
2. You requested advice on lowering the income requirement for sponsors and making Parent Boost a limited visa. Initial advice was provided alongside the Cabinet paper [REQ-0010961 refers]. You subsequently requested further advice, including about requiring a period of time offshore within the visa duration.
3. Advice on these three matters is included below. We are now seeking your decision on which options to progress in the draft Cabinet paper for consultation.

Requiring a period offshore within the five-year visa duration

4. We previously provided you with advice on whether to allow for a full five years onshore or require visa holders to leave during their visa duration. This advice noted that allowing five years onshore would likely increase attractiveness, reduce operational complexity and align with Canada, but would increase de-facto settlement and overstaying risks [REQ-0010049 refers]. Your Advisor Reference Group (ARG) recommended requiring a period offshore within the visa duration to reduce these risks and you subsequently sought further advice on how best to operationalise this.

5. Aligning with settings for the current Parent and Grandparent Visitor Visa (the PGVV), you could require both:
 - a maximum total time onshore within the visa duration (for the PGVV this is 18 months within the three-year visa); and
 - a maximum time onshore at any one time (for the PGVV this is six months).
6. In the case of a five-year visa, for simplicity, this could be allowing:
 - a maximum total time of four¹ years onshore within the five-year visa; and
 - a maximum time onshore at any one time of no more than two years.²
7. As with the PGVV, this would give parents options for how these conditions could be met – they could spend six months offshore after each two-year stay or could frequently take smaller trips within the visa duration (i.e. cumulating in at least 12 months of time offshore).
8. While you could require a set period offshore within the visa duration e.g. visa holders must leave for at least three or six months (increasing the likelihood the visa holder would return home instead of take a short holiday), this adds significant complexity for the system and the user, particularly in the context of a multi-entry visa (e.g. if parents are coming and going, how the period offshore is calculated).
9. We instead recommend aligning with the approach taken for PGVV but note that this means that visa holders could technically go offshore for a single short trip within the four-year period to meet these conditions (as long as they did not stay onshore for more than two years at a time).
10. Maintenance of the law
11. Alternatively, you could consider either shorter visas (which could be rolled over e.g. multiple three-year visas) or allowing an initial period onshore followed by the ability to extend the visa (e.g. an initial three-year visa with the ability to extend for a further two years). Either of these options could require the subsequent application/extension to be made from offshore (in line with your intent to require a period offshore). Both options would also allow for more frequent touch points with the system, either a whole new application, or, for example an extension could just be conditional on meeting key criteria where there are greater risks (e.g. a new health check).
12. In the context of the Coalition Agreement, which commits to a five-year visa, we have assumed multiple shorter visas is likely to be out of scope for further consideration. An initial three-year duration with the ability to extend for up to a further two years, however, may be a

¹ This could be four and a half years.

² Prior to a change in mid-2023, Canada only allowed for two year stays at a time.

favourable option. While we would need to do further work on the operational design, this could look like:

- an initial visa application and fee/levy which allows multiple entry for up to three years; and
 - an ability to apply to extend the visa from offshore for up to two years – this extension process could be lighter touch and lower cost than a full visa application by just checking key details e.g. health and insurance.
 - this could be done twice (i.e. three plus two then another three plus two) up to a total of 10 years on Parent Boost visas.
13. Subject to further design work, we consider this option reduces complexity compared to requiring a period offshore within the visa duration (but would increase implementation complexity³). We note that prior to the change in mid-2023 to a five-year visa, the Canadian Super Visa was a two-year visa with the ability to extend for a further two years, so this option maintains some alignment with Canada. It would, however, increase costs and effort for visa holders compared to a single five-year visa.
14. Officials are available to discuss this further with you and can reflect your preferred approach (or multiple options should you wish to test them with your colleagues) in a revised draft Cabinet paper.

Income requirement for sponsors

15. As noted in initial advice, there is no precise methodology to determine the income requirement for sponsors that is appropriate. The amount of income required to adequately support a parent will vary based on family arrangements, sizes and fixed costs.
16. It is, therefore, a blunt and somewhat arbitrary threshold but can be used in the context of your broader objectives. A lower threshold would support greater access (particularly for those on lower incomes) but would increase volumes and subsequent risks for the health system. It also increases risks that sponsorship obligations are unable to be met, and parents are not adequately supported. A higher threshold would reduce access and may raise concerns from migrant communities. However, it would help to manage volumes while also providing greater assurance that sponsorship obligations could be met.
17. We initially recommended aligning the threshold with the income requirement for sponsors for the existing Parent Category Resident Visa. This would help to manage volumes, target higher-skilled workers and increase financial means available (compared to a lower threshold). It would also mean parents eligible for the Parent Boost Visa would be more likely to be eligible for residence under the Parent Category Resident Visa should they wish to remain in New Zealand [REQ-0010049 refers].
18. We subsequently received feedback from your ARG that there was likely to be significant concern raised by migrant communities if the threshold was as high as the Parent Category (the lowest annual income to sponsor being 1.5x median – currently \$98,623.20 per annum),⁴ even in the context of alternate options for the parent to meet the income/funds requirement instead of the sponsor.

³ We may need to build two visas and two sets of instructions, SOPs, guidance, etc. This implementation would be phased (initial three-year visa first, then the two-year extension later). We would provide you with further advice on the timing and impacts of this should you wish to consider this option further.

⁴ For the Parent Category, income requirements can be met by one or two sponsors and vary based on the numbers of parents sponsored. The amount a sponsor needs to earn to sponsor one parent is 1.5x the current New Zealand median wage for a single sponsor (currently \$98,623.20 per annum) and 2x the current

19. You discussed with officials on 10 March 2025 that we should consider a lower income threshold for the sponsor. There are two options we have considered:
- 80% of the median wage – aligning with the threshold to support dependent children – this is currently \$55,844 per annum.
 - The median wage – aligning with the general base threshold to receive residence (noting some exceptions notably Resident Visa 2021(RV21), and Pacific and humanitarian pathways) – this is currently \$69,804.80 per annum.
20. We do not recommend aligning the income threshold with that to support dependent children at 80% of the median wage. This threshold for dependent children was chosen, in part, because it was a level comparable to base welfare rates for those with children. While we consider this threshold appropriate for an elementary family unit, in most cases, a parent would be an added cost which we do not think could be covered adequately at that level (particularly as sponsors are required to provide accommodation). It would also risk significantly increasing volumes eligible (and subsequently health system risks), especially considering the large numbers of migrants who received residence under RV21, as only one of the three eligibility pathways for RV21 had an income threshold requirement.
21. The median wage would align with the general base threshold to receive residence as a skilled migrant – meaning residents should generally meet this threshold (with some exceptions). The slightly higher income threshold also provides a greater likelihood the sponsor can meet their financial obligations compared to 80%. If you wanted to progress an option lower than the current Parent Category requirements, we would recommend the median wage as a starting point, but that this be scaled based on the number of parents sponsored (akin to the Parent Category) e.g. up 0.5x median wage per parent, to ensure additional costs can be covered.
22. Should you wish to progress with a lower income threshold there would be increased risks that volumes could be higher than anticipated (i.e. greater than the pool of approximately 15,000 parents waiting for the Parent Category) – which could increase pressure on the health system (even if costs are covered by the sponsor/parent and insurance). You could consider other options to mitigate the risks of higher volumes including:
- Having greater health insurance requirements (noting this would also decrease the financial accessibility of the visa).
 - Capping the visa (though capping mechanisms have not been scoped and would be likely to delay implementation of the visa).
 - Considering other ways to tighten the pool of eligible sponsors e.g. aligning with Parent Category and requiring a period of time as a resident before being eligible to sponsor.
23. These are also options that could be considered alongside the proposed review of the visa, once we have greater certainty about the volumes of parents who will access this visa.

Making Parent Boost a limited visa

24. You have indicated your interest in making Parent Boost a limited visa following the suggestion from the ARG that this was a way to reinforce its temporary nature. Officials previously provided you with legal advice on this which is summarised below and reattached in full at **Annex One** for ease of reference.

New Zealand median wage for joint sponsors (currently \$131,497.60 per annum). The minimum income increases by half the New Zealand median wage for each additional parent, up to a maximum of six parents.

[Legally privileged]

Legal professional privilege



Revised Cabinet timing

31. Following your decisions in this paper and any further feedback, officials will provide a revised draft Cabinet paper for circulation for Ministerial and agency consultation.
32. To allow for a full two weeks of Ministerial and agency consultation, it is no longer possible to seek Cabinet decisions in April as previously proposed. We have also received feedback from the Treasury that the nature of this proposal means it could not be agreed by Cabinet during the Budget Moratorium (14 April – 22 May).⁶ We have therefore proposed a timeframe, as outlined in the table below which would see the paper considered by the Cabinet Economic Policy Committee (ECO) on 21 May and confirmed by Cabinet on 26 May.
33. At this stage, Parent Boost can still be delivered by September with late May Cabinet decisions. However, we note that this is tight and means that delays and/or significant changes to the proposed design could result in a delay to implementation. We note that delays to Parent Boost implementation could have flow on implications for other planned delivery (e.g. of new seasonal pathways) should you still wish to implement this year.

What?	When?
Revised Cabinet paper provided to the Minister in light of decisions taken	By 10 April
Ministerial and agency consultation	14 April – 2 May (slightly longer than two weeks as this falls over Easter/ANZAC)
Final Cabinet paper provided to the Minister	8 May
Lodge	15 May
ECO	21 May
Cabinet	26 May
Detailed design work	May/June
Implementation	September

Further work on the fee/levy and detailed design will progress alongside consultation

34. As previously advised, the draft Cabinet paper includes a placeholder for the proposed fee and levy for the visa. We have included an estimate to support consultation but plan to undertake work on the appropriate fee and levy alongside consultation. We will provide you with final advice to prior to lodging.
35. Further work is required on the detailed design of the visa. This will include (but is not limited to) consideration of the most appropriate approach to monitoring and enforcing sponsorship obligations and how the health requirements (acceptable standard of health) will interact with medical waivers.

Annexes

Annex One: [Legally privileged] – Legal professional privilege

⁶ We tested with the Treasury whether we could seek agreement to all parameters except the fee and levy during the moratorium but were advised this would also breach moratorium.

Legal professional privilege



Legal professional privilege

