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Media release

Proposed immigration visa changes heading in the right direction to support tourism

Proposed changes to temporary work visas and better workforce planning should assist employers and regions facing staff shortages, Tourism Industry Aotearoa says.

The Government announced today it is consulting on a new framework for employer-assisted temporary work visas to ensure access to overseas staff is better matched to where there are genuine skill shortages.

TIA Chief Executive Chris Roberts says the proposals are heading in the right direction to provide relief for many regional tourism operators and the tourism industry will be keen to work with Government to get the best possible outcomes.

The proposed changes include the introduction of a simplified framework for an employer-led temporary work visa system; the introduction of Regional Skills Shortage Lists to better assist regional shortages; the introduction of sector agreements to address structural issues; and improving the alignment of the immigration welfare and education systems to deliver better outcomes.

“We welcome the recognition that there are significant regional differences and a one-size-fits-all approach doesn’t work,” says Mr Roberts.

“TIA’s [People & Skills 2025 report](#) identified a regional approach to addressing people and skill issues as being important. We welcome a model that takes a regional response to the issues.”

TIA has been critical in the past of the lack of a shared approach across government agencies to address tourism issues, and Mr Roberts says it is good to see the Coalition Government newly committing to this with the alignment of immigration, welfare and education systems.

“TIA have been working in conjunction with the [People & Skills Forum](#) on a package of initiatives to attract more New Zealanders to the tourism industry, to be finalised in the early part of 2019. It is good to see that the Government’s proposed changes align with our work in that area, as it will only strengthen our ability to implement structural change.”

TIA also sees potential in the introduction of sector agreements to ensure long-term structural issues are addressed and that employing New Zealanders is a priority.

TOURISM INDUSTRY AOTEAROA

Inspire House, 125 Featherston St, Wellington 6011, New Zealand
P +64 4 499 0104 www.tia.org.nz E info@tia.org.nz



“We are also supportive of the Employer Check process. However, there is the risk that in stamping out the exploitative actions of a few, we hinder the vast majority of employers who act in a professional and ethical manner,” says Mr Roberts.

“Therefore compliance requirements in the Employer Check should be rigorous but not overly burdensome. At first glance, the 12 month accreditation window seems too narrow for those who can demonstrate consistent good practice. We look forward to working with the Government on developing this process so it fits for businesses of all sizes.”

TIA will be making a full submission in response to the new proposals.

For more information, please contact:

Nic Still

Communications Advisor

027 215 6124

nic.still@tia.org.nz

KEY FACTS

- Tourism in New Zealand is a \$107 million per day industry. Tourism delivers around \$44 million in foreign exchange to the New Zealand economy each day of the year. Domestic tourism contributes another \$63 million in economic activity every day.
- Tourism is New Zealand’s biggest export earner, contributing \$16.2 billion or 20.6% of New Zealand’s foreign exchange earnings (year ended March 2018).
- 13.5% of the total number of people employed in New Zealand work directly or indirectly in tourism. That means 365,316 people are working in the visitor economy.
- The [Tourism 2025](#) growth framework has a goal of growing total tourism revenue to \$41 billion a year by 2025.

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