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Media release

Work visa changes to support NZ tourism employers

Changes to the temporary work visa process should support New Zealand's tourism industry to find the workers it needs, particularly in regions like Queenstown, Tourism Industry Aotearoa says.

Immigration Minister Iain Lees-Galloway has today announced sweeping changes to the process of obtaining a work visa. The new employer assisted temporary work visa process is set to be easier for employers, while supporting New Zealanders to be considered first for vacancies.

"While tourism operators would always prefer to hire New Zealanders, the reality is that it is not always possible. Many TIA members operate in regions where no suitable New Zealanders are available for some roles. So they rely on temporary overseas workers to ensure they can provide the services our visitors require," TIA Chief Executive Chris Roberts says.

The package announced today is a significant improvement on the Government's initial proposals and responds to many of the issues raised in [TIA's submission](#), Mr Roberts says.

"I want to congratulate the Government on listening to our feedback, and recognising that the employment needs in the regions can be very different from our main centres. They have also recognised that the current system is overly complex, particularly for small businesses."

TIA has been working with Immigration New Zealand to improve its processes for approving tourism workers, and this will continue. The changes announced today will not be fully in place until 2021, so tourism employers will still be using the current system for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 high seasons.

"A welcome interim step will be replacing the current complicated skill bands with a simple salary threshold by mid-2020," Mr Roberts says.

The tourism industry, with the support of Government, is also putting a lot of effort into attracting New Zealanders to work in tourism. It was announced last month that one of the first projects to be funded by the new International Visitor Levy would encourage Kiwis to '[Go With Tourism](#)'.

The \$5.2 million investment will support a range of initiatives, including a partnership with Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development, to promote and attract talent into tourism through the expansion of its '[Go with Tourism](#)' initiative.

It will be supported with other workstreams that will aim to improve education and workforce planning, and upskilling programmes for businesses.

TOURISM INDUSTRY AOTEAROA

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“Building the tourism workforce is a high priority for both TIA and the Government, through its Tourism Strategy. This includes getting more Kiwis into the tourism workforce, while also allowing employers to access temporary workers from overseas when there is a clear need. It’s positive that we are working together on this, to achieve good outcomes for tourism, and ultimately benefit New Zealanders and Aotearoa,” Mr Roberts says.

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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 & Beyond** sustainable growth framework/Kaupapa Whakapakari Tāpoi has a vision of growing a sustainable tourism industry that benefits New Zealanders.

Visit www.tia.org.nz for more information

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