

## Immigration Update: December 2016

Dear all,

It is hard to believe we are fast approaching the end of 2016! I have really enjoyed the opportunity to meet with a wide range of people in the tourism sector during the course of the year – both during my trips to various parts of the country, and at industry events.

Given that the Christmas holiday period just around the corner, I thought it would be timely to provide a snapshot of some of the key INZ developments for 2016.

I hope that all of you have a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year - I look forward to continuing the discussion in 2017!

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### 1. Visitor visas

#### *China*

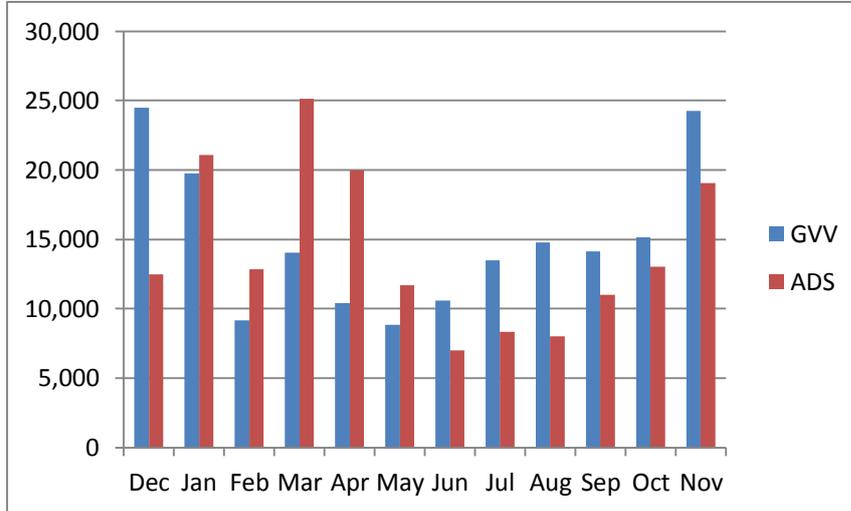
Our three China offices (Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong) decide approximately 40% of the visitor visa applications that INZ processes globally.

Over the past 12 months (December 2015 to November 2016) our China offices have approved visitor visas for 372,976 applicants, with an overall approval rate of 95%. The majority of these applications are decided within 5 calendar days – INZ currently processes 87% of Chinese visitor visas within this timeframe.

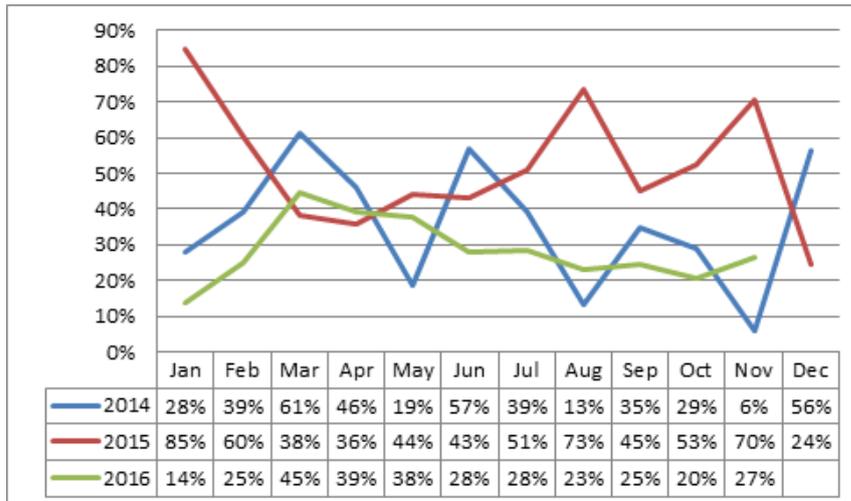
2016 has been a continuing shift in the China market away from **ADS group** visas to individual **General Visitor Visas** (GVVs). While GVV numbers have continued to steadily grow, the second half of 2016 has seen a drop in ADS applicant numbers.

This has meant that for the first time ever, during the course of a 12-month period, GVV applicants have outnumbered ADS, with the year to November 2016 seeing 179,080 people approved GVVs compared with 169,650 approved ADS visas.

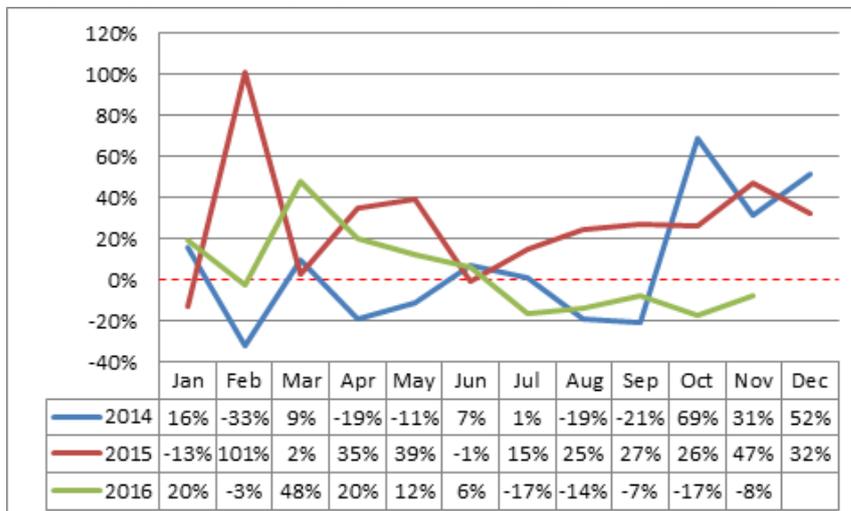
Graph 1: Approved Chinese visitor visa applicants, INZ China office, 01 Dec. 2015 to 30 Nov. 2016



Graph 2: approved GJV people – YOY monthly percentage change 2014 to 2016



Graph 3: approved ADS people – YOY monthly percentage change 2014 to 2016



2016 saw the introduction of **eVisas**<sup>1</sup> for Chinese people applying for visitor visas, and the establishment of an **end-to-end Chinese language online visitor visa** system – covering the entire application process from registration to approval.

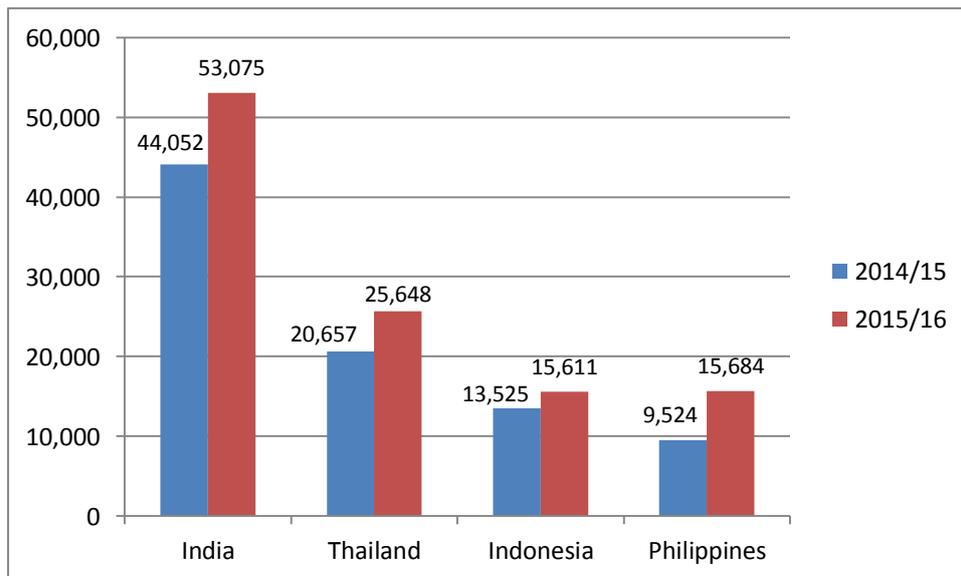
It is our understanding that New Zealand is currently the only western country with an online visitor visa application system available in Chinese.

These changes have had an impact on the number of people choosing to apply for visas online in Chinese – from fewer than 20 per week earlier in the year, to more than 400 applications per week now.

*Other visa required markets*

The number of visas issued by our offshore offices located in other visa required markets has also continued to grow, with an increase in the number of visas issued in **India, Thailand, Indonesia** and the **Philippines**.

*Graph 4: Approved visitor visas, INZ-India, Thailand, Indonesia and Philippines offices, 12 months to November*



<sup>1</sup> eVisas mean that recipients will not have a physical visa label in their passport; instead their visa is held electronically

### *Tourism Industry Partnerships*

INZ's Tourism Industry Partnership (TIP) programme was one of the initiatives identified during the 2012 China Market Review, commissioned by the Minister of Tourism and undertaken by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment with a joint industry/government expert advisory group.

The first of INZ's tourism industry partnerships was established with China Southern Airlines in November 2012, and since then a number of other TIPs have been established with airlines, travel agencies and financial institutions.

The purpose of this programme is to provide a streamlined visa application process for premium members belonging to these organisations.

The highlight of INZ's TIP programme this year was the signing of **three new partnerships in China**. In April, the head of Immigration New Zealand (Nigel Bickle, pictured below) travelled to China with the Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism, John Key, signing TIPs with Air China, China Eastern Airlines and the Bank of China.



This brings the total number of TIPs in place with major Chinese corporates to five – China Southern Airlines, China Eastern, Air China, China UnionPay and the Bank of China.

2016 also saw several new TIPs signed with major corporates outside China, including:

- Singapore Airlines,
- Thai Airways, and
- Philippine Airlines.

Overall, the number of people applying for visas through one of INZ’s TIPs continues to grow.

Financial Year	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
<b>Number of TIP applicants</b>	237	570	1,901	7,944	5,852*

\* for the period 01 July to 02 December 2016.

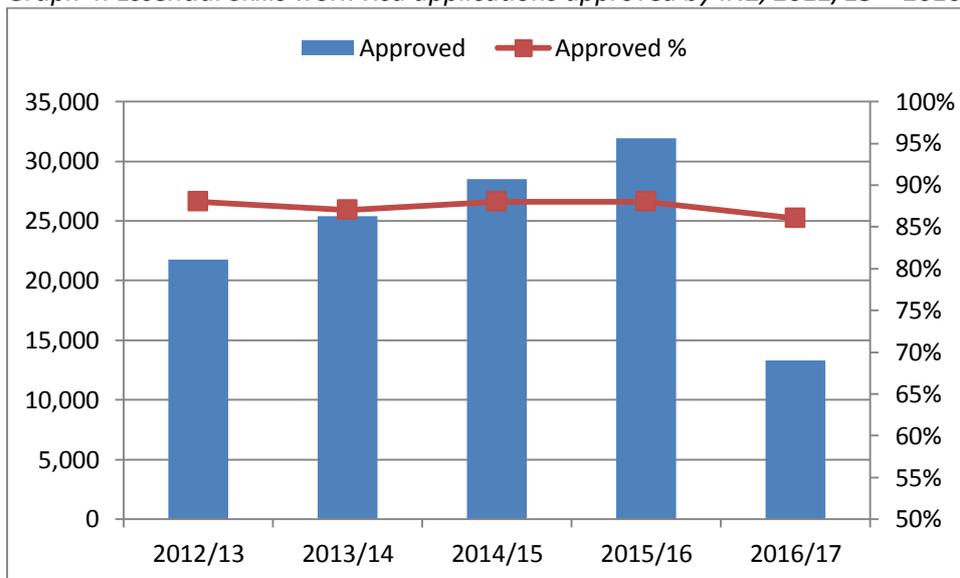
For more information about our TIP programme, please click [here](#).

## 2. Work visas

During the course of the year the number of work visas issued by Immigration New Zealand has continued to grow.

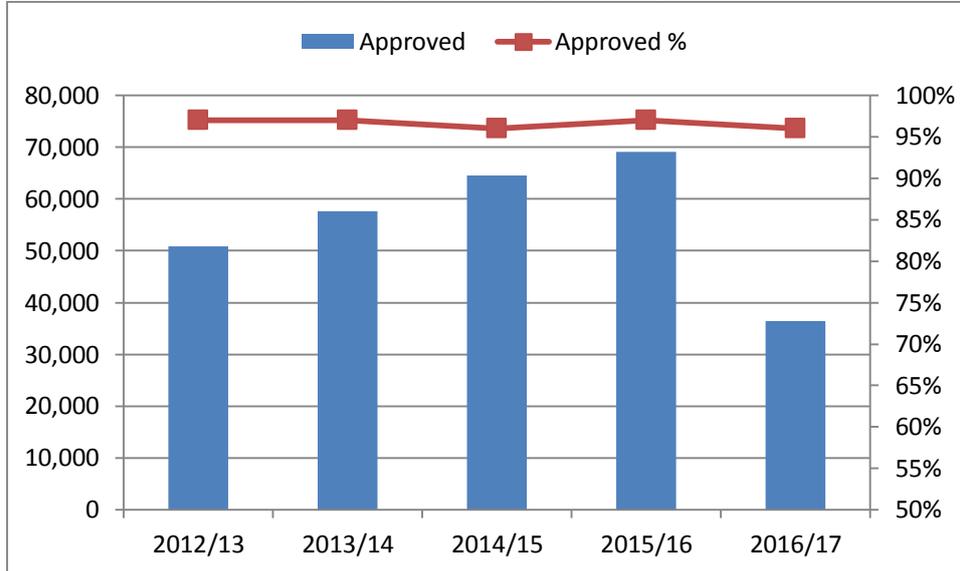
The below graphs show the trend in the number of approved **Essential Skills** and **Working Holiday visas** issued by INZ since 2012/13.

*Graph 4: Essential Skills work visa applications approved by INZ, 2012/13 – 2016/17*



*Note: for the financial year to date (i.e. 01 July to 30 November 2016), INZ has approved 13,280 Essential Skills applications, compared with 13,295 during the same period in 2015.*

Graph 5: Working holiday visa applications approved by INZ, 2012/13 – 2016/17

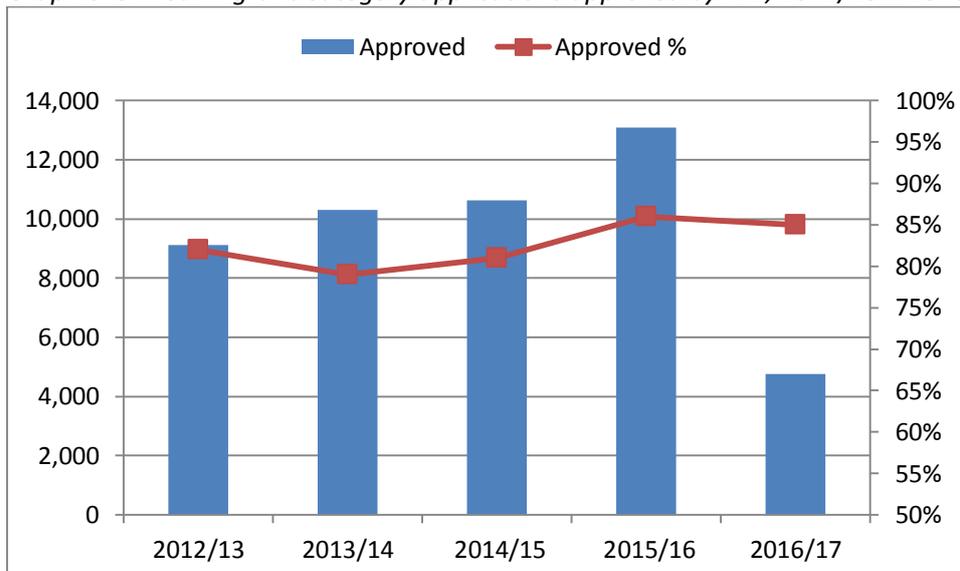


Note: for the financial year to date (i.e. 01 July to 30 November 2016), INZ has approved 36,388 WHV applications, compared with 31,631 during the same period in 2015.

### **3. Residence visas - Skilled Migrant category**

In October 2016, the threshold for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) increased from 140 to 160 points. This means that only those applicants who qualify for 160 points or more can be invited by INZ to apply for NZ residence under the Skilled Migrant Category. This change was made due to the very high demand for places under the Skilled Migrant Category.

Graph 6: Skilled Migrant Category applications approved by INZ, 2012/13 – 2016/17



Note: for the financial year to date (i.e. 01 July to 30 November 2016), INZ has approved 4,761 applications. While fewer than the number of applications (5,434) approved during the same period in 2015, it exceeds that for 2014 (3,666).

## **4. Other developments**

### *Visitor information*

INZ has worked in collaboration with the below agencies to produce information brochures for Chinese and Indian nationals planning a holiday to New Zealand, and who have been approved visitor visas. Copies of these brochures are now being provided to Indian and Chinese applicants granted General Visitor visas by INZ's China and India offices.

- Ministry of Health,
- Accident Compensation Commission,
- Ministry of Transport,
- New Zealand Transport Agency,
- New Zealand Police,
- Ministry of Primary Industries,
- Tourism New Zealand,
- Chinese Embassy, and
- Indian High Commission

This brochure (English version used for the India market) is attached with this newsletter for your information.

### *Tour Escorts*

In November 2016 a change to immigration policy was made, allowing improved facilitation of tour groups accompanied by tour escorts to NZ.

Once this policy change takes effect (from early to mid-2017), tour escorts will be able to travel to New Zealand as visitors. At the current time, policy requires that tour escorts hold work visas, so this change will mean easier visa applications for tour escorts from visa-required countries (who will be eligible to apply for visitor visas rather than work visas), and visa-free travel to NZ for tour escorts from [visa-waiver countries](#).

### *Information for Working Holiday visa holders*

INZ has recently partnered Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA) and the Backpackers Youth Adventure Tourism Association (BYATA), to determine what INZ can do to help working holidaymakers find out about tourism and hospitality employment opportunities.

The tourism and hospitality businesses that we surveyed provided valuable information about the sorts of jobs they tend to hire temporary workers for, and how they usually advertise and recruit people into these roles.

INZ's next step is to engage with working holidaymakers by email, to provide them with relevant information about temporary work opportunities in the tourism and hospitality sectors. These emails will contain links to hospitality and tourism job boards, summarise the insights we gained from the survey that are likely to be relevant to working holidaymakers, and provide general information on settling into New Zealand and relevant news of the day. The aim is for these messages to go live prior to Christmas.