

Background to Christchurch Response (2019) visa

Why has this decision been made?

The Government has made the decision to provide a humanitarian response to people directly affected by the attacks and provide certainty to individuals about their immigration status in New Zealand so they are able to have long-term family support in New Zealand. This visa category recognises that a number of those directly affected by the attacks are temporary visa holders and, through the death and/or injury of a family member, means their own eligibility for residence would have been affected. It ensures that those who were on a pathway to residence prior to the attacks are assured of their residence.

Who is covered by this policy?

The special visa category has been set up for three groups that were all significantly affected by the terrorist attacks:

- New Zealand-based families in which an **immediate family member died**;
- People living in New Zealand who were physically **injured** in the attacks, and their New Zealand-based immediate families and
- People living in New Zealand who were physically **present at one of the mosques at the time of the attacks but were not physically injured**, and their immediate family who were living in New Zealand.

How many people will be eligible for the offer of residence?

It is estimated that around 190 people will be eligible for permanent residence. It is estimated that nearly half of those eligible would be transferring from residence to permanent residence, while the remainder would be transferring from a temporary visa to permanent residence.

NOTE: This number includes estimates of individuals directly affected and their families. Where the directly affected person is a child, then their parents, dependent siblings and grandparents already living in New Zealand are eligible. Where the directly affected person is an adult, then their partner, dependent children and parents already living in New Zealand are eligible.

Directly affected means those who died, those who were physically injured and those who were present at the mosques but did not die or incur physical injury (and were living in New Zealand as at 15 March 2019).

What requirements will applicants have to meet?

The new visa category will be as streamlined as possible while ensuring that any potential risks continue to be managed. Medical and financial requirements for this visa are in line with other



humanitarian visas. The high threshold for security checking and identity verification that is applied to all residence visas will continue to apply for this special visa. All who are eligible for this visa category would already be in New Zealand on a temporary basis and so would have passed a level of security checks for these temporary visas: the checks that will be applied for this special permanent resident visa will be the additional checks usually applied for residence applications.

The Government has decided that the fees, levies and the cost of any medical certificates for visa applicants will be met by the Crown.

How will INZ know that people were in the mosques at the time of the attacks?

Immigration New Zealand will consult with the New Zealand Police to confirm whether a person was killed, injured or present at the mosques (but who did not die or were physically injured). Communicating directly with the Police about the status of applicants will allow for robust and independent verification of eligibility. It will also speed up the process, and will avoid requiring vulnerable applicants to provide evidence of trauma unnecessarily.

How is immediate family defined under this policy?

For this special policy, immediate family is defined as a partner, dependent children, and parents. In the case of a child, this would include their parents, other dependent children, and grandparents

What options are there for people who don't meet this new policy?

This policy is intended to provide certainty to people living in New Zealand about their ability to remain here permanently. Other people who were significantly affected by the attacks may be able to apply for other visas depending on their circumstances.