

VISA PAK ISSUE 462 — 26 FEBRUARY 2021

VISITOR VISA EXTENSION AND INSTRUCTIONS CHANGES

In order to respond to some of the ongoing effects of COVID-19, the Minister of Immigration has agreed to a combination of changes to visitor visa immigration instructions and an extension of certain visitor visas.

I. Special Direction Extension

On 18 February 2021, the Minister of Immigration signed a Special Direction to extend onshore visitor visas, valid on 19 February 2021, with an expiry date between 19 February 2021 and 31 March 2021 (inclusive). These were extended by two months from the date of stay expiry. Visitor visas granted under Section 61 are included. COVID-19 Short Term Visitor visas have not been extended, as these visas are granted for the explicit purpose of arranging travel to return home.

Implementation

AMS is expected to be updated by the end of February. Once implemented, the Expiry Date Stay will be updated and will be displayed on both the Visa Summary section and Visa Detail Section (both are under Visa Tab in AMS).

INZ will email the affected visa holders to confirm their visas have been extended by 5 March 2021. It is expected that some visa holders will not receive the communication, as in some cases the address supplied may no longer be current or valid, or might have been of a third party.

Anyone captured in the Special Direction is lawful from the date the Special Directions came into effect (19 February 2021) regardless of what appears in AMS. If their visa expires and they appear unlawful in AMS, their visa will be extended and immigration history amended to delete the unlawful record once AMS is updated.

If you receive an enquiry from an eligible visa holder whose visa has not been extended on AMS, please check if they meet the eligibility requirements. If you think they should have been extended please direct them to the INZ website to fill out the extensions eligibility form available from early March.

Partners and dependents affected by the December Special Direction

In December 2020, the Minister extended certain employer-assisted work visas by six months, and the visas of their partners and dependents in line with those extensions. These December extensions are expected to reflect in AMS in early March, partners and dependents who are on visitor visas **and** are within the scope of the partner and dependent visa extension (see [Visapak 458](#)) will receive this two month extension first. AMS will then be updated to show the balance of what they received under the longer extension. Visa holders will be sent communications during this process to advise them their visas have been extended.

For example, an employer-assisted worker and their partner or dependent on a visitor visa both have an expiry date 15 March 2020. The work visa holder will be extended for six months to the 15 September 2021. In AMS, the visitor visa holder will first be extended by two months to the 15 May 2021. They will then be extended for a further four months in line with the work visa holder to the 15 September 2021. This will be reflected clearly in emails sent to the visa holder so they are aware of the implementation process.

II. Instructions Changes

A significant number of visitor visa holders have spent in excess of nine months in New Zealand, and therefore may not be eligible to be granted a further visitor visa under *V2.5 Length of permitted stay*. Immigration instructions at V2.5.1 have been amended to temporarily waive the requirement that a person is only eligible to remain in New Zealand on a visitor visa for a maximum of 9 in every 18 months (“the 9:18 month rule”). Instead, provided a person is inside New Zealand and applies by 30 June 2021, they may



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be granted a visitor visa of up to six months. Existing requirements to demonstrate access to sufficient support funds along with meeting health and character requirements remain unchanged.