

VISA PAK ISSUE 464 — 26 MARCH 2021

REINSTATING STANDARD TRANSIT VISA LODGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of this item is to advise staff of the reinstatement of standard lodgement requirements for the majority of transit visa applications from 12 April 2021 onwards.

June 2020 Special direction – waiver of certain requirements for making a transit visa application

On 19 June 2020, the previous Minister of Immigration made a special direction to waive certain requirements for the application for a transit visa, to facilitate applications for transit visa required persons while COVID-19 travel restrictions were in place. The requirements waived included the need to provide a signed application form; a passport or certificate of identity; and to pay an application fee. An alternative email submission channel was established, allowing applicants to download and complete the transit visa application form and email it to Immigration New Zealand (INZ) (at transit.visa@mbie.govt.nz).

The situation has changed significantly since the signing of the special direction and most applicants seeking to transit New Zealand will now be able to apply through the usual channels.

On 9 March 2021, the Minister amended the special direction dated 19 June 2020, in order to:

- reinstate normal transit visa lodgement requirements for people applying from all countries except Tonga and Samoa; and
- continue to waive certain lodgement requirements for people applying for transit visas from within Tonga or Samoa

The amended special direction is effective from 12 April 2021

From 12 April 2021 transit visa applicants (except those applying from Samoa and Tonga) will be required to lodge applications in the standard manner (this includes the need to provide a signed application form; a passport or certificate of identity; and to pay an application fee).

Difficulties in submitting applications remain in the Pacific Islands

Despite the opening of Visa Application Centres (VAC) internationally, barriers remain for third-country nationals submitting transit visa applications in Tonga and Samoa. Although Tongan and Samoan nationals are transit visa-waiver, some third-country nationals in Samoa and Tonga (e.g. Chinese nationals) are not. These people will be able to submit their applications via the pre-existing email channel.



Immigration officers also have the ability to, on a case-by-case basis, exercise discretion and waive lodgement requirements if they are satisfied an applicant is unable to submit their application via a normal channel and the immigration officer considers a waiver appropriate for the situation.