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NEW ACCREDITED EMPLOYER WORK VISA LONGER VISA DURATIONS AND MAXIMUM CONTINUOUS STAY CHANGES

Introduction — Information for immigration staff that sets out the new accredited employer work visa durations and maximum continuous stay changes.

In June 2023, the Government announced changes to the Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV). These changes took effect on 27 November 2023, and include:

- The maximum length of an AEWV increased to:
 - five years for people earning at least the median wage; and
 - three years for people in the care workforce sector paid at least the level 3 pay rate.
- A 'maximum continuous stay' of five years for most AEWV holders, with shorter periods for workers in specific sectors. The maximum continuous stay is the total time an AEWV holder can remain in New Zealand before they must spend time outside New Zealand to be eligible for another AEWV ([WA4.10.7 Maximum continuous stay and required time spent outside of New Zealand](#)). For example, after five years, an AEWV holder earning above median wage must spend at least 12 consecutive months outside New Zealand before they are eligible to be granted a further AEWV.
- Current AEWV holders can apply for the balance of the longer five-year or three-year visa if they are eligible. Their current visa will not extend automatically to the longer length – they must apply for (including paying the associated fees) and meet the relevant criteria to be granted a further AEWV.

Employers of current AEWV holders (whose AEWV was granted before 27 November 2023) can reuse existing job tokens, without completing a new Job Check, to support their worker to apply for the balance of the longer AEWV. They also need to hold valid accreditation at the point of the AEWV application being made and when the application is being decided. To apply for the balance of the longer visa with a reused job token, the AEWV must have been granted before 27 November 2023 and the holder needs to be employed in the same role with the same employer and be paid at least the same rate as when their current AEWV was assessed.



The longer duration AEWV will apply to eligible applications that are decided on and after 27 November (including any applications that were submitted before 27 November but had yet to be decided).

Processing order for AEWV balance applications

It is expected that a significant number of AEWV holders will be eligible to apply for the balance of five years.

To manage demand on the processing resources for these applications, a new general instruction on the order of processing visa applications came into effect on 27 November 2023 ([A16.1 General Instructions for the order of processing visa applications](#)). Allocation of AEWV applications where a job token is being reused to apply for the balance of the AEWV maximum continuous stay and associated family visa applications will generally only be allocated for processing once the applicant's current AEWV is within nine months of expiry. The general instruction also allows INZ Heads of Operations to allocate applications with more than nine months to the expiry of the applicant's current AEWV where processing capacity allows. Escalation requests will be managed through the existing escalation process.

System constraints

A system constraint has been identified which impacts some eligible AEWV holders. Employers do not have the ability to send a reused job token to these people. Work is underway to identify possible solutions and further information will be provided shortly.

The [INZ website](#) has information on these changes, including guidance on the steps current AEWV holders and their employers need to take to apply for the balance of the longer AEWV.