

# Q&A: Foreign Nationals Support Programme

Please [contact](#) Immigration New Zealand for issues relating specifically to immigration.

## About the programme

### Why is this programme needed?

There are approximately **355,000** people in Aotearoa on temporary visas. This group includes around **211,000** people on Recognised Seasonal Employer visas, **75,000** holding student visas, and **55,000** holding visitor visas. Of this, an estimated **20,000** are in immediate and severe hardship due to COVID-19, and are unable to meet their basic needs.

The Department of Internal Affairs is proud to be working with New Zealand Red Cross to deliver in-kind assistance to Foreign Nationals experiencing serious hardship due to COVID-19, under the \$37.6 million [Assistance for Foreign Nationals Impacted by COVID-19](#) programme.

Where returning home isn't immediately possible, assistance will be provided to foreign nationals who have found themselves in a difficult position, where it has been established that:

- the person is experiencing serious hardship, and
- all other avenues of potential support have been exhausted, such as access to savings or other assets, insurance cover, consular assistance from their own foreign missions, or help from family and friends.

This is a temporary and transitional mechanism that will run for three months, with the intention that at the end of this time, people have either returned to their home country or have secured alternative means of support.

### Is this part of the Government's COVID-19 response?

Yes. The Programme is part of our transition from immediate emergency response to longer-term recovery.

### How much is the programme worth?

The programme is worth \$37.6 million.

## How the programme will work

### How can people apply for support?

From 1 July 2020, people who have found themselves in a tough position due to COVID-19 can check their eligibility and apply through [www.foreignnationals.services.govt.nz](http://www.foreignnationals.services.govt.nz).

## **How will the programme be delivered?**

The Department of Internal Affairs is managing this programme of behalf of the Government, and is pleased to be working closely with the New Zealand Red Cross to deliver the in-kind assistance to people who are eligible and need it most, in communities across Aotearoa.

New Zealand Red Cross support will include needs assessments, local distribution of in-kind aid, psychosocial support, and by engaging the community to ensure support is reaching the people who are eligible and most in need.

This work has been undertaken in consultation with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Immigration New Zealand, National Emergency Management, local Civil Defence and Emergency groups, and the Treasury.

## **Why was New Zealand Red Cross selected as the NGO?**

New Zealand Red Cross has been contracted to deliver the Programme, on the basis that it:

- has extensive experience in delivering support to people in need
- offers nation-wide coverage and capability; and
- can coordinate resources to deliver the programme in a consistent way.

## **What will the assistance pay for?**

Under the Programme, assistance may be provided to help people who are eligible and need it most meet basic, urgent and immediate needs, such as:

- food and household goods required to meet urgent and immediate needs
- blankets, hot water bottles and basic clothing to meet urgent and immediate needs
- over-the-counter medication to meet urgent and immediate needs
- accommodation (including rent, boarding costs and rent arrears)
- utilities (electricity, gas). Excludes internet and broadband connection and plans
- if required, pre-paid phone cards to enable emergency communication and communication with consulate/embassy
- petrol/travel (limited to travel required to shift to new location for employment purposes or to airport to leave New Zealand).

Assistance will be made directly to third-parties, such as landlords or power companies, no cash payments will be made.

## **Will it fund flights home?**

No. The programme will provide in-kind assistance to help eligible foreign nationals who have found themselves in serious hardship due to COVID-19 meet their basic, urgent and immediate needs.

## **How have foreign nationals been supported so far?**

This Programme is intended to fill the gap that will be left as New Zealand's immediate emergency response to COVID-19 winds down. Until now, support has been provided by the Civil Defence and Emergency Management (CDEM) Groups.

### **Who is eligible?**

Each person's circumstances will be considered at an individual level to ensure support is reaching those who are eligible and need it most.

In-kind assistance will be provided to all classes of temporary visa holders where it has been established that:

- the person is experiencing serious hardship: and
- all other avenues of potential support have been exhausted, such as access to savings or other assets, insurance cover, consular assistance from their own foreign missions, or help from family and friends.

Eligibility will be established through a series of checks on visa and employment status, savings, alternative sources of income or in-kind support, and outstanding debts.

### **What classes of visa does this apply to?**

It applies to all classes of temporary visa holders.

### **How long will the Programme run?**

This is a temporary and transitional mechanism that will run for three months, with the intention that at the end of this time, people have either returned to their home country or have secured alternative means of support.

### **How long will it take for assistance to be provided?**

We are working to target of provision of assistance within 48 hours. We expect some categories of in-kind assistance could be made immediately, while others may require up to 48 hours to process.

### **Have other Government agencies been involved?**

In the management of this programme, government agencies have been involved to ensure clarity and consistency, including: Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (Immigration New Zealand), Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Treasury, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, National Emergency Management Agency, Ministry of Education.

### **Why is the Government not just sending these people back to their home country?**

There are increasing reports that some foreign nationals are experiencing serious hardship due to the impacts of COVID-19, and are unable to meet their basic needs. This programme will provide eligible people who have found themselves in a difficult spot with in-kind assistance, so they can meet basic needs, like food and accommodation.

The delivery of assistance will be underpinned by a clear focus on helping people to help themselves. Application mechanisms and any direct case management provided will emphasise the fact that government assistance is temporary, and that returning home is the first option that should be actively pursued.

#### **Will personal savings be taken into account when determining serious hardship?**

Foreign nationals assessed as being in serious hardship can retain savings at a level assessed as sufficient to support their flight back to their home country.

## **Recognised Seasonal Employer visa holders and employers**

#### **What is the approach to Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) visa holders and employers?**

Applications for in-kind assistance to RSE workers will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, which may include as an individual or as a group.

Immigration New Zealand is working with employers of RSE visa holders to ensure they have up to date information on the programme, including where to apply.

#### **Do RSE workers need to use their savings to be eligible for assistance?**

In line with the purpose of the RSE scheme, RSE workers will not be required to use their savings to be eligible for in-kind assistance through this programme.

#### **How do RSE employers access the programme on behalf of RSE visa holders?**

Employers of RSE workers can apply on behalf of RSE visa holders through the New Zealand Red Cross by calling 0800 RED CROSS.

Employers will need to provide New Zealand Red Cross with their RSE status and the names of the RSE visa holders they are applying on behalf of.

## **More information**

#### **Who do I contact for more information?**

If you have a question that has not been answered above, please email the DIA Programme Team at [foreignnationalsupport@dia.govt.nz](mailto:foreignnationalsupport@dia.govt.nz). This inbox will be monitored regularly.