

Immigration Shake-Up: Key Updates for Employers

A wave of immigration changes are rolling in throughout 2025, following the government's December 2024 announcements

Immigration Minister Erica Stanford has made the government's intentions clear:

"Our focus remains on attracting more higher-skilled workers while managing migration levels responsibly, so New Zealand has access to the skills we need to grow our economy."

The changes in place and soon to be implemented are:

Market Rate Instead of Median Wage (March 2025)

One of the more significant changes is that accredited employers will no longer need to pay the median wage for Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV) holders—market rate will apply instead, which will be role specific. This makes sense, as the median wage requirement often forced employers to pay well above market rates and, in some cases, more than what New Zealand citizens or residents earned in the same role.

It's not clear at this stage whether the change will apply beyond AEWV holders.

Market rate is what a New Zealand citizen or resident would expect if they were working in a similar role, at the same level. INZ use different sources to figure this out, for example the salary data on careers.govt.nz and seek.co.nz.

Employment Modules No Longer Required (January 2025)

Migrant workers and 'Key People' (those involved in recruitment) no longer need to complete employment modules from Employment New Zealand. Instead, Immigration New Zealand will provide resources outlining employment rights and obligations.

Labour Hire Domestic Workforce Threshold Lowered (January 2025)

For certain construction roles, the required percentage of New Zealand workers in a labour hire firm has dropped from 35% to 15%, making it easier to recruit migrant workers.

Lower Experience Requirement for Some AEWV Applicants (March 2025)

Applicants for ANZSCO Skill Level 4 and 5 roles will now need two years of relevant experience instead of three. While this is a step in the right direction, two years is still a reasonably lengthy period of experience required for some lower-skilled roles.

Less Paperwork for Job Checks (March 2025)

Employers no longer need to provide evidence of WINZ engagement or list vacancies for 21 days. Instead, a simple declaration confirming the role was advertised and suitable candidates interviewed will be enough.

Longer Visa Duration for Lower-Skilled Workers (March 2025)

New AEWV applicants in ANZSCO Skill Level 4 and 5 roles will get three-year visas instead of the current two-year visa plus a one-year extension. This will result in less paperwork, time, and cost for employers.

Higher Income Threshold for Supporting Dependent Children (March 2025)

AEWV holders will need to earn at least NZ\$55,844 (up from \$44,322.76) to support dependent children on visas. This increase is based on inflation (it hasn't been updated since 2019.)

Interim Work Rights for Visa Applicants (April 2025)

Work visa holders applying for an AEWV will now have interim work rights, as will student visa holders applying for an AEWV (during term time). This will reduce

Immigration Shake-Up: Key Updates for Employers (Continued)

disruptions for workers and employers during the application process.

New Seasonal Work Visa Pathways (November 2025)

The current seasonal work pathways will be replaced with:

- A three-year multiple-entry visa for experienced workers
- A seven-month single-entry visa for lower-skilled workers

Details are still emerging, and we expect to have more information closer to the time.

Streamlined Job Check Process (Mid-2025)

A revised Job Check process will be introduced to reduce processing times for low-risk employers. We're still waiting on further details, but this should be a positive step.

Remote Work Allowed for Visitor Visa Holders

Visitors can now work remotely for an overseas employer while in New Zealand, provided their primary purpose is to visit (e.g. for sightseeing or visiting family). This aligns with the global rise in "digital nomad" visas, but New Zealand's version is fairly limited—work is only allowed for up to six months (multiple entry) or nine months (single entry) and the primary purpose of the visit cannot be to work in New Zealand.

What This Means for Employers

These updates are mostly a welcome change for employers and migrant workers.

With many of these changes taking effect in the coming months, now is the time for employers to review their hiring plans and ensure they're ready to take advantage of the new settings.

Want to know more?

If you have any questions about the case or the topics discussed in this article, please contact our specialist [Employment Team](#).