

## **Changes to the Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV) and median wage**

Changes to the AEWV on 10 March 2025 will impact both employers who hire migrants and workers who are applying for an AEWV.

### **Changes from 10 March 2025**

#### **Accredited Employer Work Visas and Seasonal Specific Work Visa**

- Employers recruiting workers under the AEWV and seasonal SPWV policies will no longer be required to pay the median wage.
- There will be no set pay thresholds except the New Zealand minimum wage (currently NZD \$23.15 an hour, increasing to NZD \$23.50 an hour on 1 April).
- Employers will however, **still be expected to pay migrant workers on par with their New Zealand counterparts** (the New Zealand market rate).
- Current AEWV holders should continue to be paid in line with their employment agreement and visa conditions.

#### **Sector Agreements**

- which provided an exemption to the median wage will be removed alongside this change.
- Sector Agreements which offer residence pathways will continue to do so, with no changes to the wage rate required to gain residence.
- The removal of sector agreements means that roles previously covered by sector agreements for below median wage jobs are no longer subject to restrictions such as caps or limitations on visa duration and instead will be treated the same as other jobs of the same skill level.

#### **Reducing the work experience requirement for migrants from 3 years to 2 years**

- The work experience requirement for migrants will be reduced from 3 years to 2 years.

- Employers still have to check that their migrant worker meets the threshold, and applicants will still need to provide evidence that they meet the 2-year threshold.
- This change will still make sure that migrants have enough experience to help minimise the risks of exploitation.

#### **Amending the requirement for employers to engage with the Ministry of Social Development (MSD)**

- Requirement for employers to engage with the MSD will now become declaration based.
- Employers will need to declare in good faith, that they have advertised lower skilled roles (ANZSCO skill level 4 and 5) with MSD and interviewed candidates who may be suitable for the role.
- Employers will be required to retain evidence of their engagement as they may be requested to provide it. This can be done alongside recruitment employers will already be undertaking in the domestic labour market.

#### **Increasing the visa duration for ANZSCO Level 4 and 5 AEWV holders to 3 years**

- The visa length for new ANZSCO Level 4 and 5 AEWVs will be extended to 3 years, matching the total time they can stay in New Zealand on 1 or more AEWVs (their maximum continuous stay).

#### **Increasing the income threshold for supporting dependent children**

- The income threshold will be increased from an annual threshold of NZD \$43,322.76 to NZD \$55,844.
- This is 80% of the median wage (aligning with eligibility for partner work rights) based on an annual, 40-hour work week.
- It will be updated annually in line with changes to the median wage.
- The previous income threshold will continue to apply where a child held a visa on, or had applied for a visa, before 10 March.

- This ensures that children who are already here do not have to leave if their parent can meet the old threshold but cannot meet the new one.

### **Recognition of higher ANZSCO skill levels**

Immigration NZ is transitioning from the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) to the National Occupation List (NOL) - there are differences with the classification of some roles.

- So that applicants are not disadvantaged, from 10 March 2025 the following occupations will be treated as ANZSCO skill level 3 to align with their skill level in the NOL:
  - Cook (351411)
  - Pet groomer (361113)
  - Kennel hand (361115)
  - Nanny (421113)
  - Fitness instructor (452111)
  - Scaffolder (821712)
  - Slaughterer (831212)
- There are also 4 other roles that will be recognised as ANZSCO skill level 3 where the employer has specified that the job needs either 3 years of work experience or a level 4 qualification, as part of the job check.

This ensures skilled workers can be retained in certain critical jobs. These 4 roles are:

- Agricultural and horticultural mobile plant operator (721111)
- Excavator operator (721214)
- Forklift driver (721311)
- Mobile plant operators not elsewhere classified (721999)

### **Updates to interim visa work rights**

- In April 2025, there will be further changes coming into effect regarding work rights for people on interim visas while they are awaiting the outcome of an AEWV application. This includes:
  - allowing AEWV applicants to have interim work rights if they apply while holding any type of work visa or from a student visa that permits work during term time, and

- enabling time spent on an interim visa that allows work, to be considered when calculating a migrant's total continuous stay under the AEWV, as well as for gaining work experience needed for work-to-residence pathways.

### **Median wage changes**

- From 28 February 2025, AEWV holders who want to support a partner will still be required to meet the wage threshold, which is increasing to NZD \$26.85 an hour.
- From 28 February 2025, income thresholds for sponsors under the Parent Category will indexed to the new median wage of NZD \$33.56 an hour.
- These changes are based off Statistics New Zealand's publication of median hourly earnings for the previous year's June quarter and is intended to ensure migrants who are supporting a partner or parent have the financial means to do so.

### **If you applied for a job check before 10 March 2025, but want it processed under the new instructions**

- Immigration NZ will continue to assess job check applications against the current immigration instructions.
- However, if the March 10 changes will be more favourable for your job check application, they may consider:
  - whether an exception is appropriate given the specific circumstances of the application,
  - if an exception is not considered appropriate, they may decide to hold the application and make a decision after the new instructions come into effect.
- You do not need to contact Immigration NZ to request an exception or for Immigration NZ to hold your job check application. Immigration NZ will contact you if they decide to hold your application.

### **If your job check application is in progress**

#### **Removal of median wage requirements**

- The previous pay requirements will still apply to job check applications in progress on 10 March 2025.
- However, if your job check is approved, the migrant you are hiring can apply for an AEWV at a lower wage rate.

- If you want to offer a migrant a lower wage rate, you do not need to contact Immigration NZ to update your job check application.
- You can offer the migrant the lower rate when you invite them to apply for an AEWV.
- The pay you offer must still meet the market rate.

### **Reducing the experience requirements for migrants from 3 to 2 years**

- This will make no difference at the job check stage.
- When you apply for a job check, you still need to state what qualifications and experience a migrant must have to do the job.

### **Changes to requirements for employers to engage with MSD**

- The requirement for you to engage with the MSD as part of your job check application still applies.
- If you have applied for a job check for an ANZSCO skill level 4 or 5 role, you should have already completed this before submitting your job check application.

### **Recognition of higher ANZSCO skill levels**

- ANZSCO skill levels affect the labour market test requirements for job checks, including:
  - whether you have to advertise the job for 14 or 21 days, and
  - whether you have to engage with MSD.
- Job checks in progress on 10 March 2025 will be assessed under the new instructions that treat some occupations as ANZSCO skill level 3.
- This means that you will not have to advertise a job for 21 days or engage with MSD for any job recognised as ANZSCO skill level 3.
- If you apply for a job check and we match it to an ANZSCO skill level 4 role that will be recognised at ANZSCO skill level 3 after 10 March, we will not ask you to provide evidence showing that you engaged with MSD or advertised the job for 21 days.
- For example, if you apply for a job check for a chef (ANZSCO skill level 3), but we match the job as a cook (ANZSCO skill level 4) we will not ask you to engage with MSD or advertise the job for longer, if your application is in progress on 10 March 2025.

**If you have an approved job check but the migrant you are hiring has not applied for their AEWV**

**Removal of median wage requirements**

- AEWV applications made on or after 10 March do not have to pay NZD \$29.66 an hour (the February 2023 median wage) or any lower amount that was part of a sector agreement or wage exemption.
- If you applied for a job check on or before 9 March 2025, you can offer a lower pay rate than what was approved in the job check application.
- This new pay rate must be at least the market rate for the job. Immigration NZ will assess this during the migrant's AEWV application.

**Reducing the experience requirements for migrants from 3 to 2 years**

- From 10 March 2025, the experience requirement for migrants will be 2 years, instead of 3 years.
- This means that if your job check application included an experience requirement that is:
  - more than 2 years, you can only hire migrants who meet this requirement (for example Jockey or Trackwork Rider who requires a minimum of 3 years experience)
  - 2 years or less, you can hire migrants with 2 years of experience.

**Recognition of higher ANZSCO skill levels**

- Migrants applying for an AEWV must meet English language requirements if they have been offered an ANZSCO skill level 4 or 5 job.
- From 10 March 2025, English language requirements will no longer apply for any ANZSCO skill level 4 job that will be treated as an ANZSCO skill level 3 job.
- This applies even if the job check was approved before 10 March 2025.

## **Impacts for AEWV workers**

### **If you applied for an AEWV before 10 March 2025, but want it processed under the new instructions**

- Immigration NZ will continue to assess AEWV applications against the current immigration instructions. However, if the March 10 changes will be more favourable for your AEWV application, Immigration NZ may consider:
  - whether an exception is appropriate given the specific circumstances of the application
  - if an exception is not considered appropriate, they may decide to hold the application and make a decision after the new instructions come into effect.
- You do not need to contact Immigration NZ to request an exception or for them to hold your AEWV application. They will contact you if they decide to hold your application.

### **If your AEWV application is in progress**

#### **Removal of median wage requirements**

- If you apply for an AEWV on or after 10 March 2025, you do not have to paid at least NZD \$29.66 an hour (the February 2023 median wage) or any lower amount that was part of a sector agreement or wage exemption.
- If you have applied for an AEWV you can provide Immigration NZ with updated employment information while your visa is being processed, including a change to the pay rate.
- You must agree to the new pay rate, and it must:
  - meet the market rate, and
  - be at least NZD \$23.15 an hour (the New Zealand minimum wage).

#### **Reducing the experience requirements for migrants from 3 to 2 years**

- If you have an AEWV in progress on 10 March 2025, you should have already provided evidence of 3 years of work experience with your application.

- However, if you have only provided 2 years of work experience, Immigration NZ can accept this if your application is in progress on 10 March 2025.

#### **Increasing the visa duration for ANZSCO skill level 4 and 5 AEWV holders to 3 years**

- If you are applying for an ANZSCO skill level 4 or 5 job and your AEWV application is in progress on 10 March 2025, your visa will have a longer length of 3 years if it is approved.

#### **Increasing the income threshold for supporting dependent children**

- The higher income threshold will apply if you apply for your dependent child's first visa after 10 March 2025.
- If your dependent child already has a visa, or if they have an application in progress on 9 March 2025, they will be assessed using the previous lower income threshold.

#### **Recognition of higher ANZSCO skill levels**

- If you are applying for an AEWV you must meet English language requirements if you have been offered an ANZSCO skill level 4 or 5 job.
- From 10 March 2025, English language requirements will no longer apply for any ANZSCO skill level 4 job that will be treated as an ANZSCO skill level 3 job.
- This applies even if your employer's job check was approved before 10 March 2025.

#### **Employees who already have an Accredited Employer Work Visa**

##### **Applying for another AEWV with a reused job check**

- You may be eligible for another AEWV from 10 March 2025, if your current AEWV was issued for less than 3 years.
- From March 10 2025, the maximum visa length for AEWVs will match the total time you can stay in New Zealand on 1 or more AEWVs (your maximum continuous stay).
- When you apply for another AEWV, you can reuse a job token if you are staying in your current job, in the same location and working for the same employer.



### **Jobs paid less than the median wage**

- You can apply for another AEWV to stay in New Zealand for either 3 or 5 years if:
  - you are paid less than NZD \$29.66 an hour (the February 2023 median wage), and
  - your job is covered by a sector agreement or wage exemption.
- You can stay in New Zealand for 3 years if your job is ANZSCO skill level 4 or 5, and for 5 years if your job is ANZSCO skill level 1, 2 or 3.

### **Supporting dependent children**

- The higher income threshold will apply if you apply for your dependent child's first visa after 10 March 2025.
- If your dependent child already has a visa, or if they have an application in progress on 9 March 2025, they will be assessed using the previous lower income threshold.

### **Recognition of higher ANZSCO skill levels**

- Once you get an AEWV, the ANZSCO skill level of your job determines your eligibility to support your partner or dependent children for long-term visas.
- Most ANZSCO skill level 4 and 5 AEWV holders are not able to support visas for family.
- If you have an AEWV for one of the jobs that will be treated as ANZSCO skill level 3, you will be able to support family for visas from 10 March 2025 even if you got your AEWV before this date.
- You will also be able to apply for another AEWV and stay in New Zealand for 5 years in total instead of 3.

### **The great news for the Racing Industry:**

- Statistics New Zealand will be introducing a new NZ classification system called the National Occupation List (NOL)

- It will take some time for Immigration New Zealand to transition to the new classification system.
- They will continue to use the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) until then and will provide a further update in 2025 when they have a confirmed switch over date.

**Under the NOL to be introduced later this year – the following is finally clearly identified under the code Jockey (even though we use this code under current instructions for Trackwork Riders with 3 plus years' experience)**

**Skill Level 3:**

- Jockey, Apprentice Jockey, Jockey, Track Work Rider, Trackwork Rider, Track Rider

**Definition**

- NZQCF Level 4 qualification, or at least three years of relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualification (NZQCF Level 4/NOL Skill Level 3).
  - Rides horses in competitive races, race trials, and in exercise.
  - This occupation requires high levels of physical fitness, sporting ability and personal commitment as well as, or in place of, formal qualifications or experience.

**Kind Regards**

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