

16 April 2021

Education and Workforce Committee
Parliament
Via [the website](#)

Tēnā koe

Immigration (COVID-19 Response) Amendment Bill

Tōpūtanga Tapuhi Kaitiaki o Aotearoa, New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Immigration (COVID-19 Response) Amendment Bill.

NZNO is the leading professional nursing association and union for nurses in Aotearoa New Zealand, representing 51,000 nurses, midwives, students, kaimahi hauora and health workers on professional and employment matters. NZNO embraces te Tiriti o Waitangi and contributes to the improvements of the health status and outcomes for all Aotearoa New Zealanders through influencing health, employment, and social policy development. Furthermore, we share the intent of the Ministry of Health's definition of equity which equally applies to NZNO work across professional, industrial and member activities.

NZNO is committed to growing the supply of 'home grown' nurses and other health workers, especially Maori and Pacific peoples, but this is a 'long game'. In the meantime, Aotearoa relies heavily on an international health workforce. For this reason NZNO supports the Amendment Bill which will extend the expiry dates of powers under the Immigration Act (2009), implemented in 2020 to manage the complexities created by a global pandemic. Visa holders and applicants, including many healthcare and border workers, are impacted by the powers of, and decisions made, under the Act.

Twenty six percent of Aotearoa New Zealand's current nursing workforce comes from overseas, mainly from the Philippines and India. Nursing Council of New Zealand nursing workforce statistics 2018-2019ⁱ show that Filipino and Indian RNs comprise 49.4% of RNs working in aged residential care (ARC) which is deemed a high risk COVID setting. Conditions of employment and remuneration offered by many ARC providers often means that it is a clinical area of last choice for nurses to choose employment in. As a consequence any shortages experienced across the nursing workforce will manifest first in ARC, a clinical environment with the greatest need.

The 'pipeline' of health workers from overseas is impacted by border closures, with the current suspension of travel from India being a case in point. Any changes to the way the Act is administered must consider the impact on hard-to-staff services in the health sector, and must remain responsive to address any unintended consequences for this critical workforce.

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Nāku noa nā

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ⁱ https://www.nursingcouncil.org.nz/Public/News_Media/Publications/Workforce_Statistics/NCNZ/publications-section/Workforce_statistics.aspx?hkey=3f3f39c4-c909-4d1d-b87f-e6270b531145