

Border access and managed isolation

- **Review immigration criteria to enable a broader range of workers to enter New Zealand**
- **Enable a 10 percent quota for critical workers as we further develop the allocation system for managed isolation places**
- **New Investment Attraction Strategy to encourage targeted and high-value international investment into New Zealand**

As the global situation worsens, strict border controls are our first safety net against COVID-19, and underpin our approach to preventing new cases from entering New Zealand.

That's why in Government we have established a managed isolation and quarantine system that has been described as one of the strictest in the world. The system allows people to safely enter New Zealand by requiring them to remain in a Government-run facility for 14 days. Our approach is working, with almost 50,000 people entering New Zealand through managed isolation so far.

The facilities operate in a strict level four environment and under Labour they will continue to do so. We have set the highest public health standards, and following detailed risk assessments across the country, it has been determined that safe capacity for suitable facilities that meet the strict public health criteria for managed isolation has nearly been reached. The public health criteria ensure that both people returning and the wider community are kept safe.

These criteria mean we currently have sufficient capacity for about 14,000 people a month to safely enter New Zealand. While new evidence or technologies, or the establishment of a safe travel zone with Australia might increase capacity, until then we must be cautious about considering significant expansion of capacity, or changing our isolation model.

Despite the current capacity constraints, Labour recognises the importance of businesses having access to critical skills they cannot find in New Zealand to keep the economy moving forward, and that's why, within our publicly-run system we are working to ensure capacity exists to carefully enable a wider group of people to safely enter the country.

Labour will look for opportunities to progressively expand the eligibility of people able to enter New Zealand

As the global pandemic intensifies, many New Zealanders living offshore are finding themselves in increasingly difficult situations. We have a responsibility to maintain a pathway for them to come home safely. We expect that in the near term, a significant portion of the 14,000 managed isolation places per month will continue to be utilised by New Zealanders.

Within these constraints, we have already been facilitating entry for many critical workers across a range of industries. For example, these workers have enabled work on key energy infrastructure to proceed, major infrastructure projects to continue, protected thousands of New Zealand jobs, and facilitated millions of dollars of inward investment. These workers are essential to our economic recovery.

Recently, the Government has announced changes to allow additional people to come into New Zealand. This includes partners of New Zealand citizens and residents, and new border exceptions for normally resident work visa holders with strong, ongoing links to New Zealand and an existing job or business.

We know some businesses and sectors are unable to access the skills they need to operate and grow.

- **Labour will review the immigration criteria to enable a broader range of workers to enter New Zealand**

There is currently a high bar for exceptions for critical workers to come into the country. We will work with business and sector leaders to help define and prioritise critical workers, with a view to broadening the range of workers who can gain entry to New Zealand, and to provide the clarity and certainty that individuals and businesses need.

We continue to see a need for industry and sectors to work with government to demonstrate how we can transition away from our reliance on migrant labour. Labour remains committed to a focus on training New Zealanders to fill the skills gap and build the workforces we need to grow the economy. That is the reason why we have provided free access to all apprenticeships and a range of trades training courses. However, we recognise that for some projects and sectors, there are gaps that require expertise that cannot be immediately met, or gaps that cannot be quickly filled.

Labour will also continue to invest in training New Zealanders to build the skills needed to drive our economy by providing free access to all apprenticeships and to a range of trades training courses. With our tight border restrictions and the impact COVID-19 is having on domestic incomes and job opportunities, we know there is a balance between bringing in workers from overseas and creating a more highly skilled workforce at home.

- **Enable a 10 percent quota for critical workers as we further develop the allocation system for managed isolation places**

Labour will continue to progress work on the allocation system for managed isolation places to ensure there is capacity set aside for critical workers. We will allocate a 10 percent quota for non-New Zealanders to come in to the country and contribute to accelerating our recovery. The priority for places in managed isolation facilities needs to be for New Zealand citizens and permanent residents who have the legal right to return home. This system will meet those obligations, but will also ensure capacity for critical workers and other groups. Additional capacity not used by New Zealanders can also be made available for these groups.

Labour will leverage New Zealand's global position

New Zealand's success in responding to COVID-19 has gained attention around the world. Our reputation and standing gives us a window of opportunity to make New Zealand an attractive home for companies.

We have seen the very significant economic and health benefits available from eliminating the virus. New Zealand's economy is well positioned to withstand the impact of the global pandemic. Our export sector is strong, we have low debt, and some of the least restrictive domestic COVID-19 policies in the world.

While we have limited capacity in our managed isolation facilities, we understand the importance of having a longer term strategy to maximise economic opportunities when we can safely start expanding capacity, or reopen our borders.

- **Labour will launch an Investment Attraction Strategy to encourage targeted and high-value international investment into New Zealand**

The first phase of our strategy will be an increase in funding for New Zealand Trade and Enterprise and the Innovative Partnerships programme, who work with companies to invest in New Zealand - including by locating part of their business here. The funding will be \$12 million per year, split equally between NZTE and Innovative Partnerships.

The Innovative Partnerships programme is focused on supporting research and development intensive businesses to invest in New Zealand. Innovative Partnerships have to date supported \$160 million of research-based economic investment into New Zealand. The programme is proven - supporting companies such as Wisk New Zealand, LeoLabs, Airbus and Shiratori to bring business to New Zealand.

NZTE focuses on high-quality investment opportunities in areas of competitiveness for New Zealand. Since 2018, NZTE's team has supported over \$900 million of investment creating over 800 jobs with a potential direct economic impact of over \$3.6 billion.

We will engage with firms in key sectors to gauge their interest and working with them to understand what they would need to commit to locating in New Zealand.