

PRESS RELEASE
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Aged care welcomes immigration decision on nurses

The New Zealand Aged Care Association (NZACA) applauds the Government's decision to add aged care nurses to the Long Term Skill Shortage List as a positive step to helping address chronic nursing shortages.

NZACA Chief Executive Simon Wallace says the decision, announced yesterday [8 May], by Immigration Minister Iain Lees-Galloway, will allow rest home providers to more efficiently recruit overseas nurses at a time when they are struggling to retain their valuable nurse workforce.

"We have lobbied hard for this over the last 18 months with the valued support of DHBs, Health Workforce New Zealand and the Nursing Governance Group among others. The Government has listened to our voice, responded responsibly and we welcome that," Mr Wallace says.

The Long Term Skill Shortage List (LTSSL) identifies skilled occupations where there is a sustained and ongoing shortage of workers both in New Zealand and globally. People employed in one of these occupations may be granted a work visa under the LTSSL Work to Residence Visa policy and may apply for residence after two years working in a LTSSL occupation under specific criteria.

Mr Wallace says the previous government's decision to remove aged care nurses from the LTSSL had exacerbated ongoing shortages, removing pathways to residency, leaving overseas nurses uncertain about their future in New Zealand and feeling undervalued despite their important contribution to New Zealand's industry and society.

"Our members rely heavily on being able to recruit and retain overseas nurses to be able to provide the highest quality care for our most vulnerable older people. But there are simply not enough registered nurses available and at a time when we are now losing nurses to DHBs in the wake of last year's pay settlement, this decision is a lifeline.

“We applaud the Government for acknowledging the vital and valued role overseas nurses play in caring for our ageing population, an issue which is now something that is in the top 10 things New Zealanders care most about.”

ENDS

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