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**31 July 2017**

**Government’s changes to temporary work visas don’t go far enough** The New Zealand Aged Care Association (NZACA) is disappointed that the immigration changes announced by Government do not go far enough and will not alleviate the workforce shortages facing New Zealand’s aged care sector.

NZACA Chief Executive Simon Wallace says that despite the recent uplift in caregiver wages from the Pay Equity settlement, there remains a shortage of caregivers that is expected to continue in the face of unprecedented demand as more people age and live longer than ever before.

“Our 600 members across the aged residential care (ARC) sector explore all possible options to employ New Zealanders but there just isn’t the pool of Kiwi talent available to do the work. As an example, at a recent job expo run by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), one NZACA member received a total of 249 queries followed by 138 expressions of interest, but resulting in just one suitable Kiwi being employed”, said Mr Wallace.

The ARC sector values its migrant workers who make up around 30% of around 22,000 caregivers working in New Zealand rest homes. On top of this, there will be up to 1,000 extra caregivers needed every year between now and 2026 to look after a rapidly ageing population.

Mr Wallace said the sector needs a system that allows rest homes to recruit and retain migrant caregivers while at the same time ensuring certainty of supply. Last week’s announcement by Minister Woodhouse does not do that and will see trained and committed caregivers having to leave New Zealand after three years as well as going through an annual renewal process.

The NZACA welcomes a review of the completed outdated ANZSCO classifications that have been signalled for a so-called Phase Two of temporary migration settings, but the review can’t come soon enough. Currently caregivers are classified as ANZSCO Level 4 which excludes these skilled and valued workers from the changes made last week.

“The Government has valued caregivers to the tune of $2 billion with a well-deserved increase in caregiver wages, but does not seem to be doing the same for the many migrants that make up that workforce and who are excellent in looking after our many vulnerable and older New Zealanders”, said Mr Wallace.

End.

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Link to NZACA immigration submission <https://www.nzaca.org.nz/assets/Uploads/NZACA-submission-on-the-Suite-of-proposed-changes-to-the-Essential-Skills-visa2.pdf>