

23 December 2021

To the Productivity Commission,

I am writing in response to the release of your draft report, Immigration Fit for the Future: Preliminary Findings and Recommendations.

In particular, I would like to comment on the below finding and question:

Finding 13: New Zealand is unusual in giving permanent residence visa holders an indefinite right to return, even if they have re-migrated elsewhere in the world. Other countries either require residents to return at regular points or remain in the country for specified periods if they wish to retain or renew their permanent residence visa.

Question: 5 Should the right to return for permanent residents who re-migrate out of New Zealand be limited? Under what conditions? What would be the costs and benefits?

We believe the unusual open condition of New Zealand's permanent residency is bring NZ much more benefit than risk or cost, and we should not limit the right to return for PR holders who re-migrate out of NZ because:

1. As a licensed immigration adviser, I have had many conversations with people who have migrated or are going to migrate out of their home country. Some of them have chosen NZ as the destination while many others prefer Australia, Canada, UK or USA. Apart from other reasons behind their preferences, a typical reason why some of them choose NZ is simply the more friendly (open) condition of our permanent resident visa. If we remove this merit of our PR, we will definitely see a decline in future number of residence applications. Also, I have learned that many people have given up their permanent residency of Australia, Canada, UK or USA when they had to be out of the country for a prolonged period of time—such situations (not being able to return in time) are often caused by force majeure including unwell family members in home country who need their care, rather than reasons like the individual having lack of commitment to a particular country.
2. Commitment should be something that is proactively conducted, not forced. According to your statistics (on page 51), the majority of NZ migrants (at least 85%) would continue to stay in NZ and contribute to our economy after they become eligible to obtain permanent residence anyway. It is clear that most of them do have commitment to NZ without us implementing any limit on their visas.
3. As everyone can see, since March 2020 when the pandemic started, the world is no longer the same as before—the border of any country could be shut at any point of time again either due to covid-19 variants or another reason (e.g. a new disease). Therefore, migrating to another country will only become more and more difficult for most people just for this reason alone. In other words, it is highly possible that New Zealand may

struggle with lack of population growth caused by reduced number of new migrants in the coming years. Why do we need to make it even harder for them to come and live here or return to the country?

4. There are countries that do not allow dual nationalities. This is a key reason why many permanent resident visa holders do not apply for NZ citizenship- if they do, they will have to give up the citizenship from their home country which makes it risky for them to return home and visit their families who will never migrate to NZ for whatever reasons. By adding the abovementioned limitation onto their PR, it is putting those people in an awkward situation-what if they have to spend a long period of time in their home country due to unexpected reasons while they really want to return and continue to contribute to NZ after 3,5,10 years? What is the reason that we should refuse them?
5. Initiating the idea of limiting the rights of PR holders for the reason of promoting "commitment" itself has already recognised the value of new migrants. The only way to attract valuable people to join us is to make things easier and more friendly to them, rather than forcing them to stay.

In conclusion, on behalf of all the current and future NZ permanent resident visa holders, I strongly support the open condition of the current PR visas and disagree with the idea that we should copy what other countries do to add any limitation on their right to return to NZ in future.

Thanks for taking my views into consideration.

Warm regards,

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