

26 February 2001

Media Release

Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs

Minister Welcomes Social Security and Immigration Changes

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The Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Mr Philip Ruddock, today welcomed changes to social security and immigration arrangements between Australia and New Zealand.

"Under the changes, most New Zealand citizens who move to Australia after 26 February 2001 will need to meet permanent residence visa requirements before they can access social security payments, apply for Australian citizenship or sponsor their non-New Zealand family members for permanent residence," Mr Ruddock said.

New Zealand citizens in Australia today (ie 26 February 2001) are not affected by the changes. They will still be able to apply for the full range of social security payments providing they meet the usual requirements, and the two-year newly arrived resident's waiting period.

"The new arrangements have been introduced with the express purpose of implementing the new social security agreement and apply to all New Zealand citizens, regardless of place of birth. It provides a more equitable base for the free-flow of people between each country."

Mr Ruddock described the changes, announced by the Prime Minister, John Howard, and the New Zealand Prime Minister, Helen Clark, as a major step towards bringing the situation of migrants from New Zealand more into line with the position of migrants from other countries.

"Under the changes, Australian and New Zealand citizens will continue to be able to visit, work, study and live in each other's country indefinitely as has been the case for many years," Mr Ruddock said.

People affected by the new arrangements will be:

- New Zealand citizens who move to Australia after today.

Transition arrangements will apply to:

- New Zealand citizens who were in Australia on 26 February 2001;
- New Zealand citizens who were outside Australia on 26 February 2001 but have spent at least 12 months here in the two years immediately before this date;
- New Zealand citizens who apply for and receive a certificate, issued by Centrelink, stating that for the purposes of the Social Security Act 1991, even though they were temporarily absent on 26 February they have been determined to be residing in Australia;
- New Zealand citizens who have made irreversible decisions to relocate to Australia on or prior to 26 February 2001 and take up residence within three months of that date, and are certified by Centrelink as residing in Australia.

On arrival to Australia, most New Zealand citizens are automatically granted a Special Category Visa, which enables them to live and work in Australia indefinitely. This will not change.

"However, New Zealand citizens who wish to apply for permanent residence will be able to apply before they leave for Australia or after their arrival here," Mr Ruddock said. Previously, skilled New Zealand citizens could only apply for permanent residence while overseas.

Another feature of the new arrangements is that a new temporary visa has been created to allow New Zealand citizens moving to Australia after 26 February 2001 to be accompanied by their non - New Zealand citizen family members.

It is intended that access to employment services, health care (Medicare), public housing and primary and secondary education in Australia will not be affected by the new agreement. Detailed information on these changes is available by phoning **133 242** or by accessing the special purpose website www.nz-oz.gov.au.

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Further Information

Further information is also available from the [website](#) of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.