

Chair

Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

SUPPORT FOR TEMPORARY VISA HOLDERS IN HARDSHIP FROM 1 SEPTEMBER 2021

Proposal

- 1 This paper notes that the Ministry of Social Development's (MSD) provision of Emergency Benefits to temporary visa holders in hardship will end, as planned, on 31 August 2021.
- 2 This paper also seeks Cabinet agreement to an extension of the Immigration New Zealand (INZ) Repatriation Fund for six months, or until funding is depleted, to support temporary visa holders in New Zealand who are in hardship and require assistance with the costs of travel to return home, and who are referred to INZ by their foreign mission.

Relation to government priorities

- 3 This proposal relates to the Government's ongoing COVID-19 response.

Executive summary

- 4 The New Zealand Government has provided support to temporary visa holders in hardship in various forms since April 2020, in response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This support has ranged from assistance with repatriation funding through to financial and in-kind support administered by non-governmental organisations (NGOs).
- 5 Temporary visa holders are currently able to access support through the provision of Emergency Benefits, (since 1 December 2020) and the INZ Repatriation Fund (since 1 July 2020). As at 30 June 2021, MSD has made 401 Emergency Benefits grants to temporary visa holders, at a cost of approximately \$1.462 million (gross), with support scheduled to end on 31 August 2021. The INZ Repatriation Fund has supported 64 people referred to the fund with financial assistance to travel home, at a cost of approximately \$116,000.
- 6 These support mechanisms formed part of the emergency response to COVID-19 in recognition of the difficulties temporary visa holders faced supporting themselves in New Zealand and returning to their home nations. Support for temporary visa holders was always intended to be temporary and centred on supporting those in hardship to return home, where possible; or alleviating hardship until they were able to return home or support themselves.
- 7 International flight connectivity and flights out of New Zealand have improved since the New Zealand government began supporting temporary visa holders in hardship. Commercial flights departing New Zealand are now available to almost all of the 'home' (last known residence) countries of temporary visa holders supported by the Emergency Benefits. Access to key transit hubs has also increased since the opening of Trans-Tasman Quarantine Free Travel (TT QFT) on 19 April 2021, which increased departing flights from New Zealand to Australia and forward connections from there. TT QFT remains dynamic in response to the COVID context in relevant states within Australia. At times there may be more or fewer departing

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flights from New Zealand as a result of pauses on inbound passengers (and corresponding commercial decisions on outbound flight viability).

- 8 Difficulties in international travel are still present for some regions. For example, s 6(a) have not had viable flight pathways for a sustained period and there are capacity constraints on some regular flight routes to the Pacific. s 9(2)(f)(iv)
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) is in conversations with Pacific governments regarding the repatriation of their nationals. Tonga, which is home to 27% of temporary visa holders recipients of Emergency Benefits, s 6(b)(i)
- 9 The provision of the Emergency Benefits will end on 31 August 2021, as planned. However, supporting temporary visa holders to return to their home nations where they cannot support themselves remains a priority. To give effect to this priority, I recommend extending the unspent balance of the INZ Repatriation Fund (\$784,000) until either the fund is exhausted or for a period of six months (subject to review), to assist individuals in hardship with the costs of repatriation, to further support this priority. Immigration officials will report back to the Minister of Immigration on the uptake of the fund in February 2022, or earlier if depletion is imminent.
- 10 Access to INZ's Repatriation Fund will be on the basis of a letter of support from temporary visa holders' foreign missions, where the mission advises INZ that their national, the foreign mission and their Government are unable to meet the costs of repatriation. Financial assistance would cover the costs of both travel and COVID-19 testing, where this is a prerequisite to travel. INZ has advised MFAT of the details that foreign missions will need to provide to support in a letter of support for access to the fund, and this will be conveyed to all foreign missions in advance of the cessation of Emergency Benefit support.
- 11 Based on current data, MSD estimates that there will be approximately 60 to 80 temporary visa holders receiving Emergency Benefits support on 31 August 2021. MSD is working to implement transitional mechanisms for the small group of temporary visa holders that may be in unique situations requiring assistance, or facing difficulty returning to their home nations. These mechanisms include communicating to temporary visa holders advising them of available support mechanisms; utilising Community Connectors to provide information on alternative support services; and, connecting clients with their foreign missions for ongoing support and access to the INZ Repatriation Fund.
- 12 Ending Emergency Benefits and continuing the INZ Repatriation Fund ensures that New Zealand's support mechanisms for temporary visa holders better reflect overall improvements in domestic settings as well as international flight connectivity, which have enabled most temporary visa holders to support themselves or return home. Our support for temporary visa holders will also more equitably align with the end of the New Zealanders Stranded Overseas Programme on 31 August 2021, and other nations' approaches to supporting temporary visa holders within their jurisdictions.

Background

Following the COVID-19 outbreak, the New Zealand Government has provided various mechanisms of support to temporary visa holders in hardship since April 2020

- 13 At the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in New Zealand, there were 381,000 temporary visa holders in New Zealand. Due to the impacts of COVID-19, some of these temporary visa holders became stranded in New Zealand, with some experiencing hardship. As at June

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2021, there was a total of 232,000 temporary visa holders in New Zealand (some of whom had entered over the past 16 months).

- 14 In response to the impacts of COVID-19, the New Zealand Government has provided various mechanisms of support to assist temporary visa holders to return home or alleviate hardship until they could return home or support themselves in New Zealand. These include:
 - 14.1 from April 2020, during New Zealand's immediate response to COVID-19, Civil Defence Emergency Management Groups managed initial support for temporary visa holders,
 - 14.2 from 1 July 2020 – 30 November 2020, the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) and the New Zealand Red Cross (NZRC) established the *Assistance for Foreign Nationals Impacted by COVID-19 Programme* (the DIA Programme), assisting 12,794 temporary visa holders at a total cost of \$26.5 million,
 - 14.3 from 1 December 2020 – 31 August 2021, MSD has provided Emergency Benefits to temporary visa holders in hardship, making 401 grants as at 30 June 2021 at a total cost of \$1.462 million (gross),
 - 14.4 since 1 July 2020 to present, INZ has been providing funding through the INZ Repatriation Fund to assist people who are in hardship and require assistance with paying for travel to return to their home country.
 - 14.5 work rights have also been extended, including by enabling some people to work more or for different employers, and extending visas (most recently, for up to two years).
- 15 The intent has been to provide balanced support that recognises the difficulties that temporary visa holders face due to COVID-19; while also being temporary in nature, to support the immediate emergency response to COVID-19 and encourage temporary visa holders to return home.

The provision of Emergency Benefits to temporary visa holders was intended to be a short-term solution to an unprecedented situation...

- 16 At the end of the DIA Programme, there were a number of temporary visa holders who remained unable to return home and in hardship in New Zealand. In response to this, Cabinet agreed to fund the provision of the Emergency Benefits to temporary visa holders, through section 64 of the Social Security Act 2018 (the Act), from 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021 [CAB-20-MIN-0476 refers].¹
- 17 Towards the end of this support, there was still a group of temporary visa holders in hardship and facing difficulties returning home. As a result, Cabinet agreed to fund an extension of the provision of the Emergency Benefits to 31 August 2021 [CAB-21-MIN-0024 refers].
- 18 The provision of Emergency Benefits to temporary visa holders was intended to be a short-term solution to the emergency response to COVID-19. It was aimed at supporting temporary visa holders in hardship who were arranging options to return to their home nation, or who could not return home (and had taken all reasonable steps to find an alternative means of support, including contacting their own foreign mission for support).

¹ Temporary visa holders are generally not eligible for assistance under the Act due to their temporary visa status. Section 19 of the Act states that a person is not entitled to receive a benefit if they are lawfully resident or present in New Zealand only by virtue of holding a temporary entry class visa. There is a provision in section 64 of the Act that allows MSD to pay the Emergency Benefits to any person, regardless of residency status, if there is an epidemic management notice in effect and the Minister for Social Development and Employment provides written approval for this.

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... and take up has been lower than expected

- 19 Take-up of the Emergency Benefits has been lower than initially expected, for various reasons.² Estimates for 1 December 2020 anticipated 5,800 grants at an estimated cost of approximately \$16 million. Since 1 December 2020, MSD has received approximately 655 Emergency Benefits applications and made 401 grants, at a total cost of approximately \$1.462 million (gross). Some temporary visa holders may also be receiving rates of Family Tax Credit and Best Start Tax Credit, estimated to be approximately \$137,000 for the period 1 December 2020 – 30 June 2021.³
- 20 Key MSD data shows that of the current 78 grants of Emergency Benefits at 20 July 2021:
 - 20.1 18 grants have included at least one dependent child⁴
 - 20.2 those on work visas making up 38 percent and those on visitor visas make up approximately 37 percent of current grants
 - 20.3 those from Tonga and India represent the top two countries of recipients, and
 - 20.4 the majority of people are located in Auckland (36 percent), Canterbury (17 percent), Wellington (15 percent) and Waikato (9 percent).

The INZ Repatriation Fund was intended to assist migrants identified as being in hardship with the costs of their travel home

- 21 The INZ Repatriation Fund has been used to assist with the costs of travel to migrants' home countries where they have already been assessed as in financial hardship (under the DIA Programme or through being granted the Emergency Benefits). Migrants accessing this fund are required to repay the costs of that assistance prior to being granted a further visa to enter New Zealand.
- 22 As at 13 July 2021, of the 152 individuals referred to INZ by DIA and MSD, 124 people had departed, with 64 provided with financial assistance for their travel, and the remaining 60 individuals paying for their own travel. Of this number, 28 individuals had been referred by MSD; six of those individuals received financial assistance from the fund and 14 paid for their own travel. People that have been assisted with their repatriation have returned to a range of destinations across Africa, Asia, the Pacific, the Americas and Europe.

International flight availability has improved, and offshore border and health settings have eased since New Zealand first felt the impacts of COVID-19 in March 2020

- 23 Overall, commercial flights departing New Zealand are now available to many destinations globally, including key transit hubs that access a wide range of forward connections. At

² Lower than expected take up could be due to Emergency Benefit being a relatively low level of support, lower level of need than anticipated, different contexts of support (ie the DIA Programme provided support as New Zealand came out of Alert Levels 4 and 3), improved seasonal work opportunities and aversion to engaging with government.

³ Emergency Benefits assistance is paid up to the rate of analogous benefit only and is subject to all usual benefit rules and settings, including income and cash asset tests, obligations and abatement regimes under the Act. This limitation is due to the legal parameters that only allow for Emergency Benefits to be paid to temporary visa holders if section 64 of the Act is used. Temporary visa holders eligible for the Emergency Benefits may also receive the applicable rate of Family Tax Credit, Best Start Tax Credit, and the Winter Energy Payment (during the relevant period of entitlement).

⁴ Data at this time is not able to show the number or rate of Family Tax Credits or Best Start payments. Additionally, some people may receive these payments from Inland Revenue.

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present, there are commercial or repatriation pathways available to almost all of the “home” (last known residence) countries of temporary visa holders being supported by Emergency Benefits, with the exception of one country.⁵

- 24 This has been further facilitated by an increase in flights departing New Zealand. The last week of August 2020 saw 52 flights departing New Zealand, compared with the week of 19-25 July 2021 which saw 199 flights departing New Zealand. The opening of the TT QFT on 19 April 2021 presented a greater number of transit points through Australia. However, the recent two-month suspension of TT QFT from Australia affirms that TT QFT continues to evolve and remain dynamic in response to the COVID-19 context in Australian states.
- 25 International border restrictions continue to ease with most foreign citizens departing New Zealand able to return to their home nations, subject to adherence with health protocols, which vary across jurisdictions. Over sixty jurisdictions have now introduced reduced health protocol requirements for vaccinated travellers, and at this time, proof of vaccination is a requirement for entry into only a very small number of jurisdictions (for example, Samoa now requires arriving travellers including citizens to have been vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine approved by the World Health Organisation). Proof of vaccination is expected to facilitate greater movement across borders in the near future.
- 26 In New Zealand, access to early vaccination has been available under strict criteria since March 2021 for people needing to travel before 31 August 2021. Ministers have recently agreed to broaden the scope of criteria for access to early vaccination.⁶ The Ministry of Health is working on implementing these changes and it is expected that temporary visa holders in hardship could be included within the new policy, provided that they are returning to somewhere outside of Quarantine-Free Travel.
- 27 Flight availability remains dynamic for some locations, particularly the Pacific region. For example, s 6(a) [REDACTED] have not had viable flight pathways for a sustained period; and, capacity constraints on some regular flight routes to the Pacific, such as to Tonga, have at times resulted in demand outstripping supply. MFAT is in regular conversation with Pacific governments regarding repatriation options for their stranded nationals in New Zealand, particularly Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) workers. s 6(b)(i) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- 28 s 9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

⁵ Information on current recipients by home country is provided in Appendix One.

⁶ Ministers recently have agreed to extend the criteria for early vaccination beyond that date and broaden its scope to include international travel for business, education, visa expiry, a wider range of medical treatments and maintaining family contact.

⁷ Discussions about repatriation is ongoing. Repatriation of workers (new or stranded) is a requirement of Pacific Island countries taking up the RSE workers' border exception which has been in place since late 2020.

MSD's provision of the Emergency Benefits will end, as planned, on 31 August 2021

Supporting temporary visa holders to return to their home nations where they cannot support themselves in New Zealand remains a priority

- 29 I have considered options for ongoing support for temporary visa holders, in consultation with the Minister of Immigration. To give effect to our priority to support temporary visa holders who cannot support themselves to return home, I note that the provision of the Emergency Benefits will end on 31 August 2021, as planned; and, recommend that the INZ Repatriation Fund is maintained for a further six months, or until funds are depleted.
- 30 Our priority reflects that improvements in international travel have enabled most temporary visa holders to return to their home nations, while improved economic conditions have facilitated greater work opportunities for temporary visa holders to support themselves in New Zealand where possible. This has been further aided by a range of policy changes agreed by Cabinet, and Special Directions made by the Minister of Immigration exercising extraordinary powers under COVID-19 amendment legislation.⁸
- 31 The decisions in this paper will return welfare support settings to as they were before COVID-19, where temporary visa holders are required to support themselves if they wish to remain in New Zealand and are generally not eligible for financial assistance through the welfare system. If they are unable to support themselves, temporary visa holders will need to approach their foreign missions for consular assistance.
- 32 For temporary visa holders requiring support with the cost of flights to return home, the INZ Repatriation Fund will continue to provide assistance for those eligible, using foreign missions as the new qualifying mechanism to access the fund. The foreign mission qualifier will mean that foreign nationals are first exhausting their own Government's support mechanisms (noting, a number of Governments can offer flight loans and support, provided their nationals can meet their own key criteria).
- 33 Refocusing our response to support temporary visa holders to return home when they cannot support themselves will ensure that our support mechanisms for temporary visa holders:
- 33.1 reinforce the original intent of the Emergency Benefits as being a short-term support mechanism to an unprecedented situation
 - 33.2 better reflect improvements in economic conditions and international travel that have enabled most temporary visa holders to return home or support themselves, and
 - 33.3 more equitably align with:
 - 33.3.1 other nation's approaches to supporting temporary visa holders (including New Zealanders) within their jurisdictions
 - 33.3.2 the end of the New Zealanders Stranded Overseas Programme, also on 31 August 2021, and

⁸ For example, in January 2021 around 13,300 temporary visa holders, and their family members, received extensions to their visa expiry dates to work, study or visit. In February 2021 another 9,500 visitor visa holders' visa expiry dates were extended to enable them to remain lawfully in New Zealand if they could not return home. In June 2021, Cabinet agreed to extend the minimum duration of the Essential Skills visa from 12 to 24 months and streamline the application requirements for temporary visa holders remaining in the same role with the same employer [CAB-21-MON-0272 refers].

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33.3.3 the scope of support eligible to New Zealanders abroad through New Zealand consular assistance.

MSD will implement transitional mechanisms for the small group of temporary visa holders that will be in receipt of Emergency Benefits on 31 August 2021...

- 34 Based on current data, MSD estimates that there will be approximately 60 to 80 temporary visa holders receiving Emergency Benefits support on 31 August 2021. MSD is working to implement transitional mechanisms for the small group of temporary visa holders that may be in unique situations requiring support, or facing difficulty returning to their home nations.
- 35 These mechanisms include:
- 35.1 communicating appropriate ongoing support mechanisms to temporary visa holders
 - 35.2 utilising Community Connectors⁹ to link those in need with service providers, and
 - 35.3 connecting clients with their foreign missions for ongoing support and access to the INZ Repatriation Fund.
- 36 For temporary visa holders that may approach MSD for assistance after 31 August 2021, usual staff practice will apply. When a client contacts MSD but does not meet the criteria for assistance, staff assess whether the client's needs can be met in another way, or connect the client to other services or forms of support that may be available to them. For example, a client with an employment need and who is eligible to work in New Zealand might be informally referred to local employment opportunities in the area, whereas a client with an emergency hardship need might be referred to their foreign mission or a suitable NGO.

...including a comprehensive and proactive communications approach...

- 37 MSD will proactively communicate with clients in advance of their support ending, advising them that Emergency Benefits support will be ending on 31 August 2021 and providing information on foreign missions, as well as community and NGO support networks that may be available. These communications will be supplemented with online material to provide temporary visa holders with further information on available support services.

...facilitation support through Community Connectors...

- 38 MSD has established that Community Connectors will be able to provide facilitative support to the remaining temporary visa holders that may still face difficulty returning to their home nations after 31 August 2021. Community Connectors form part of the COVID-19 recovery plan, helping people within their community's access services by providing information and connecting them with relevant support services.
- 39 MSD will leverage the core function of Community Connectors as a facilitative and transitional support mechanism, linking temporary visa holders within their communities with their foreign missions and available community and NGO support. s 9(2)(b)(ii)

⁹ Community Connectors are contracted by MSD as part of the psycho-social response and recovery plan for COVID-19. They provide facilitation, connection and support to people so that they can access information and services in the community, including with local community groups and non-government organisations.

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40 Where clients present with employment needs, MSD is developing an approach to provide employment support within current legislative and funding frameworks¹⁰. Such support may utilise capabilities within the Community Connector network to refer clients to publicly available employment websites; leverage knowledge of regional employment opportunities to direct clients to potential employment; and, provide information about immigration and visa changes to facilitate employment.

... and support to engage with foreign missions

41 As foreign missions are generally the first point of contact for temporary visa holders who require support, MSD and MFAT have worked together since 1 December 2021 to assist those applying for Emergency Benefits in engaging with their foreign mission. MSD case managers have encouraged applicants to approach their foreign mission for support. MFAT has also been regularly engaging with the foreign missions that represent the greatest number of Emergency Benefits recipients to encourage them to engage with and support their citizens.

42 MSD and MFAT will continue to do this over the coming months during the transitional period. Community Connectors will also have this information and be able to facilitate contact between people and their foreign mission over the transitional period. MSD will offer clients as much assistance as possible to engage with their mission, however it will ultimately be the responsibility of the person to establish contact with their foreign mission and provide their own personal information. There is a possibility that some individuals do not want their foreign mission to know their personal details.

MSD, in consultation with MFAT, has developed a specific approach in respect of Emergency Benefit recipients from Tonga

43 Of the home countries of people receiving Emergency Benefits, people from Tonga represent the largest group, with approximately 21 recipients as at 20 July 2021. From available operational information, MSD understands that most of these people are currently on the repatriation flight wait list. The Government of Tonga decides the prioritisation criteria of these flights and there is generally one repatriation flight departing each month. s 6(b)(i)

44 s 9(2)(h) MSD has therefore developed an approach, in consultation with MFAT, to enable those currently in receipt of Emergency Benefits to be given appropriate verification material and information to allow the Government of Tonga to prioritise them on a repatriation flight. This approach will require the individual to approach the Tongan mission and government themselves with verification that they have been in receipt of Emergency Benefits. It will then be a decision for the Government of Tonga

¹⁰ Temporary visa holders are not eligible for formal employment services and products through MSD as current legislative and funding frameworks provide for employment services and products for New Zealand residents and citizens only.

¹¹ s 9(2)(h)

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about how to manage prioritisation on repatriation flights. MFAT have advised the Government of Tonga of this approach.

In consultation with the Minister of Immigration, I propose extending the provision of the INZ Repatriation Fund for six months, or until the fund is depleted

- 45 I recognise that there will be people in New Zealand for whom there are now open travel routes enabling them to return home, but who lack funds for their travel. I propose that the balance of the unspent INZ Repatriation Fund (\$784,000) continue to be used to assist individuals in hardship with the costs of repatriation, either until the fund is exhausted or for a period of six months (subject to review).
- 46 I recommended that the INZ Repatriation Fund continue to be used as set out above, until it is depleted, or after six months, subject to a review at the six month point of the uptake of the fund and the balance remaining. Given the low uptake of the fund to date, it is anticipated that it is likely that the current balance of the fund (\$784,000 as at 13 July 2021) will not be exhausted within six months.
- 47 INZ does not have expertise to independently determine which individuals wishing to return home are in financial hardship and unable to fund their own travel. To date, people have qualified for access to the INZ Repatriation Fund if they either been assisted under the DIA Programme, or, since 1 December 2020, had access to the Emergency Benefits.
- 48 Other New Zealand government agencies will no longer be providing an external assessment of hardship once the provision of Emergency Benefits ceases on 31 August 2021. A letter of support will therefore function as the mechanism for accessing assistance from the INZ Repatriation Fund. Under this model, the INZ Repatriation Fund could be used to assist individuals where their foreign mission provides advice to INZ that neither the individual nor the foreign mission are able to fund travel home. This also ensures that the primary mechanism for support is first and foremost the foreign government (and any assistance or loan mechanism they may have available).
- 49 As required by Immigration Instructions, individuals accessing the INZ Repatriation Fund would be required to repay the costs of repatriation prior to a further visa being granted for entry to New Zealand. INZ will set up processes for the new mechanism with foreign missions, including the ability to verify with foreign missions the details of those individuals whom they have written a letter of support for. This work will be undertaken with the assistance of MFAT. INZ will work with other agencies to clearly communicate the shift to the new mechanism to access the INZ Repatriation Fund and these processes will be included on the INZ website. MSD communications will include information on the new mechanism and processes for accessing the INZ Repatriation Fund, including proactive communications with current clients.
- 50 While assistance under the DIA Programme and the Emergency Benefits have been available only to individuals with valid visas, the new approach will not include this limitation. This may mean a cohort of people that have not been able to access any New Zealand government support to date, but who may have remained in New Zealand on expired visas, are able to access support through the INZ Repatriation Fund to return home.
- 51 INZ officials will report on the uptake of the INZ Repatriation Fund and the balance remaining to the Minister of Immigration in February 2022, or earlier if fund depletion is imminent. If there has been no or very low uptake of the INZ Repatriation Fund using the letter of support mechanism through foreign missions, consideration could be given to closing it, and returning the balance of the Fund to the Crown at that point.

Consultation

- 52 This paper has been prepared by MSD with INZ and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), in consultation with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, MFAT, Department of Internal Affairs, Ministry for Pacific Peoples, and the Treasury. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Policy Advisory Group) has been informed of this proposal.

Financial implications

- 53 There are no financial implications to ending the provision of the Emergency Benefits, and associated tax credits, as planned, on 31 August 2021.
- 54 As at 13 July 2021, there is an underspend of \$784,000 available to fund repatriation costs of individuals referred to INZ by their foreign missions, funded from an underspend in the Integrity and Security of the New Zealand Immigration System appropriation in Vote Labour Market. In consultation with the Minister of Immigration, I propose Cabinet agree that this funding continue to be used for repatriation costs until the fund is depleted, or after six months.

Legislative implications

- 55 There are no legislative implications to ending provision of the Emergency Benefits, as planned, on 31 August 2021.
- 56 There are no legislative or regulatory implications arising from the continued use of the INZ Repatriation Fund.

Regulatory impact and compliance cost statement

- 57 Treasury's Regulatory Impact Analysis team has determined that the proposal to end Emergency Benefits support for foreign nationals and to maintain the INZ Repatriation Fund is exempt from the requirement to provide a Regulatory Impact Statement on the grounds that it has no or only minor impacts on businesses, individuals, and not-for-profit entities. MSD has undertaken some voluntary analysis of the impacts of this proposal which is available upon request.

Population implications

- 58 The provision of Emergency Benefits to temporary visa holders in hardship will end on 31 August 2021. Emergency Benefit recipients are from a range of different countries, however people from the countries of Tonga and India make up most of the current recipients and may be disproportionately impacted by the ending of this support.
- 59 This may present pressure and hardship for some families and communities in New Zealand that provide financial and other support to temporary visa holders from their nations, particularly in regard to Pacific communities. These effects may be further heightened by existing socio-economic inequities experienced by these communities. While the INZ Repatriation Fund is being extended, assistance will only be available to those with flight pathways home. Assistance through the INZ Repatriation Fund may be limited for temporary visa holders from Pacific nations that have limited travel options home.
- 60 There are no immediate gender or disability implications resulting from this paper.

Human Rights Implications

61 s 9(2)(h) [REDACTED]

62 s 9(2)(h) [REDACTED]

Communications

63 MSD, INZ and relevant agencies will prepare communications and publicity material in consultation with Ministers' Offices.

Proactive Release

64 This Cabinet paper will be proactively released in part within 30 business days of being considered by Cabinet. Information contained in Appendix One should not be released proactively without further privacy and legal advice.

Recommendations

The Minister for Social Development and Employment recommends that the Committee:

- 1 **note** that provision of the Emergency Benefits to temporary visa holders will end, as planned, on 31 August 2021 [CAB-20-MIN-0476 and CAB-21-MIN-0024 refers]
- 2 **note** that the Ministry for Social Development will implement transitional mechanisms to link temporary visa holders with their foreign missions and available community and non-government organisations
- 3 **note** that the Repatriation Fund Budget in Immigration New Zealand's Integrity and Security of the New Zealand Immigration System appropriation in Vote Labour Market has unspent funding of \$784,000 as at 13 July 2021
- 4 **agree** that this unspent funding continue to be used to assist with the costs of repatriation for those people who provide a letter of support by their foreign mission to Immigration New Zealand, where the individual and the foreign mission are unable to meet the costs of that repatriation

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- 5 **agree** that assistance using this Repatriation Fund cease once the fund is exhausted or after six months, subject to a review at the six month point of the uptake of the fund and the balance remaining
- 6 **direct** Immigration New Zealand officials to report to the Minister of Immigration in February 2022 on the uptake of the Immigration New Zealand Repatriation Fund, the balance remaining, and options for the remaining funding, if any, or earlier if fund depletion is imminent.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Carmel Sepuloni
Minister for Social Development and Employment

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Appendix One - Grants of Emergency Benefits for temporary visa holders as at 30 June 2021

Due to privacy considerations, Appendix One will be made available to Ministers through a separate process.