



New Zealand House of Representatives
Te Whare Māngai o Aotearoa

Education and Workforce Committee

Komiti Whiriwhiri Take Kuranga, Take Hunga Mahi

54th Parliament
September 2025

**Petition of Carlo Jaminola: Grant
International Qualified Nurses (IQN) 3-year
open work visas**

Presented to the House of Representatives
by Carl Bates, Deputy Chairperson

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Petition of Carlo Jaminola

Recommendation

The Education and Workforce Committee has considered the petition of Carlo Jaminola—Grant International Qualified Nurses (IQN) 3-year open work visas—and recommends that the House take note of its report.

Request for changes for nurses qualified in other countries

This petition was signed by 806 people. It was presented to the House by Francisco Hernandez on 17 December 2024 and transferred to us on 3 April 2025. It requests:

That the House of Representatives urge the Government to 1) grant International Qualified Nurses (IQN) who have obtained their 2022 to 2024 NZ Annual Practicing Certificate (APC) a 3-year open work visa, and 2) limit the flow of IQN coming to New Zealand.

Qualifying to work in New Zealand as an IQN

Internationally qualified nurses (IQNs) are nurses who have trained and qualified as nurses overseas. Some countries have similar training and assessments as in New Zealand. Nurses from these countries are not required to complete a further competence assessment.

Some nurses trained in a country where the Nursing Council of New Zealand considers training is not equivalent to New Zealand standards. IQNs from those countries must demonstrate their ability to practice in New Zealand. Until June 2025 IQNs were required to undertake the Comprehensive Assessment Programme (CAP). CAP took six to ten weeks to complete. In December 2023, the Nursing Council changed the requirement to an online theoretical examination and a clinical examination. This is known as the OSCE (Objective Structured Clinical Examination). From December 2023 both the OSCE and the CAP ran in parallel. Since June 2025, only the OSCE has been accepted.

Once the relevant training and assessment have been successfully completed, an IQN is issued with an APC. The certificate is required by all nurses in New Zealand and is issued by the Nursing Council of New Zealand.

Comments from the petitioner

The petitioner is an advocate for IQNs. He sees them as a vital element of New Zealand's healthcare workforce who should be treated as such. He told us that just over 40 percent of New Zealand's nurses are trained overseas. He also said that nursing provision is something that will only become more challenging to manage as the population ages.

The petitioner told us that IQNs often come to New Zealand on visitor visas to participate in training programmes and take the clinical examination. Mr Jaminola said that during the six to nine months of their training IQNs on average spend \$30,000 to \$50,000 on course fees and living expenses. He noted that this money goes into the New Zealand economy. Mr

Jaminola thinks that if IQNs are granted open work visas their money would go into the economy too.

Visa pathways for IQNs

Holding an APC does not guarantee employment. When nurses apply for roles, one of the first questions on an application is whether they have the right to work in New Zealand. However, the right to work is not granted by holding a certificate.

We heard that the main option for IQNs to obtain a work visa is through an accredited employer. Before December 2022, nurses took the Tier 2 pathway—working for an accredited employer for two years to gain residency. In December 2022, Immigration New Zealand announced an expedited pathway to residency for IQNs. The expedited pathway shifted nurses to Tier 1, otherwise known as the green list. It gave IQNs a Straight to Residence option. However, a challenge about the Straight to Residence visa is that it can take two to three months to process, in which time an IQN’s visitor visa may lapse.

Lack of nursing vacancies

The petitioner expressed concern that placing nursing on the green list has encouraged a continuous stream of IQNs to enter New Zealand. At the same time, he told us about a “shift in policy” that encourages employers to hire nurses who are locally trained. Consequently, IQNs can struggle to find employment.

The petitioner shared the stories of IQNs who have returned to their home countries. Most of them cited the lack of working rights or opportunities as their reason for leaving New Zealand. The petitioner noted that both the Indian and Philippine embassies in New Zealand advise their citizens to be cautious of the lack of job opportunities for nurses.

Request for an open three-year work visa

Due to the above challenges, the petitioner is asking for a three-year open work visa for nurses. By “open” we understand he means a work visa not tied to a single accredited employer. Mr Jaminola drew our attention to the United Kingdom which provides working rights to IQNs who complete the relevant training programme. He argued that New Zealand will lose nurses to countries like the UK that offer more attractive schemes.

The petitioner outlined the benefit he sees in open work visas—namely that it provides more flexibility in the system. IQNs would be able to be employed by more healthcare providers and be able to fill gaps in the system. He thinks this would also help solve staffing shortages.

Request for a temporary limit on the number of IQNs

The petitioner believes that enough IQNs are currently in New Zealand to meet staffing demand. As of March 2024, 12,346 IQNs held a certificate to practise. The petitioner asked for a temporary limit to be placed on new IQNs coming into New Zealand. He thinks there is already a suitable pool of locally trained nurses and IQNs for employers to hire from. Mr Jaminola said that to be able to hire effectively from this pool, the right visa settings need to be in place.

Mr Jaminola supports prioritising the hiring of locally trained nurses, but sees this being complementary to employing IQNs. Nurses who have qualified and worked abroad have on

average 10 to 15 years of experience. They offer experience that recently graduated nurses do not. The petitioner sees both as playing an important role in the healthcare system.

Comments from Health New Zealand

Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ) explained how responsibilities for nursing are split between entities:

- Health NZ is the largest employer of nurses in the country and is responsible for ensuring public hospitals and healthcare services are staffed appropriately. It also undertakes workforce planning under the Pae Ora Act 2022 to guide the development of the nursing profession.
- The Ministry of Health | Manatū Hauora is responsible for the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003, which provides the framework for nursing regulations.
- The Nursing Council of New Zealand is the responsible authority for nurses under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act. Its functions include registering nurses, setting competence requirements, and issuing APCs.

Workforce management policies

Health NZ told us that the turnover of registered nurses is low and that it prioritises hiring New Zealand graduates. Vacancies for experienced nurses, which IQNs are more likely to be, are generally in more specialised areas. Health NZ also understands that primary and aged-care employers are experiencing fewer vacancies than previously.

It commented that New Zealand should strive to meet its own health personnel requirements as far as possible. It added that this aim is a key part of the World Health Organization's Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel. New Zealand signed up to the code in 2010.

We heard from Health NZ that, while an APC is only valid in New Zealand, it may be recognised by other jurisdictions. For example, New Zealand-based nurses who hold APCs are eligible to apply for registration in Australia without further training.

Finally, Health NZ said that it is not clear how many IQNs might apply for an open three-year work visa if that were an option. Understanding this would need to be a step in any policy consideration.

Comments from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

Immigration pathway settings

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment | Hīkina Whakatutuki (MBIE) told us that the system is designed to enable nurses to acquire work visas or residency pathways once they have a job offer. This is to allow IQNs to fill roles that locally trained nurses cannot.

As the petitioner mentioned, all nursing occupations are currently on the green list and therefore have a Straight to Residence pathway. The ministry noted that this is the immigration system's most attractive offering. IQNs may also come to New Zealand on temporary work visas, through the Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV). AEWVs can be up to five years long and will generally allow the individual nurse to apply for residency through the Skilled Migrant Category after three years.

We understand that the Government is reviewing skilled residence settings in 2025. The immigration settings for IQNs will be considered as part of this work. MBIE will work with the Ministry of Health to understand workforce demand for nurses.

Securing employment

The ministry told us that significant numbers of nurses have arrived in New Zealand in recent years—prior to March 2025, it granted 5,632 Straight to Residence visas and 6,175 AEWVs. MBIE is aware that some nurses are struggling to find jobs due to a shortage of employment opportunities. The ministry acknowledged the financial and risk burden that IQNs take on by qualifying to work in New Zealand. It also expressed gratitude to overseas nurses in New Zealand for their contributions to the health sector.

MBIE was clear that the immigration system cannot limit the flow of IQNs coming to New Zealand. This is because nurses can come to New Zealand and study for the relevant qualification (the OSCE) on a visitor visa. The number of places offered on courses is managed by the Nursing Council of New Zealand.

The ministry added that it is the responsibility of migrants to assess the job market before they travel to New Zealand for employment.

Our response to the petition

The petitioner has raised some important concerns that may be considered through the upcoming review of immigration settings.

We agree that it is important to balance the flow of locally and internationally trained nurses. We note New Zealand's obligation, under the Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel, to try to ensure a domestic nursing supply.

Some of us are concerned that the current settings may not result in positive outcomes for internationally qualified nurses who have moved to New Zealand for the purpose of finding employment in the health sector. We are supportive of the proposed approach to review immigration settings—where the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment intends to work with the Ministry of Health to understand workforce needs. We also encourage engagement with other key actors, such as the Nursing Council of New Zealand. We encourage the entities to consider the petitioner's experience and concerns as part of the review.

We would like to recognise the work all nurses do to support New Zealand and the health of the people who live here. We thank the petitioner for sharing his experiences and ideas on this important issue.

Appendix

Committee procedure

The petition was signed by 806 people. It was presented to the House by Francisco Hernandez on 17 December 2024 and transferred to us on 3 April 2025. We met between 9 April 2025 and 10 September 2025 to consider it. We received written submissions from the petitioner, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, and Health New Zealand. We heard oral evidence from the petitioner.

Committee members

Katie Nimon (Chairperson)

Carl Bates (Deputy Chairperson)

Dr Vanessa Weenink (Acting Chairperson from 16 July to 8 August 2025)

Shanan Halbert

Francisco Hernandez

Grant McCallum

Dr Parmjeet Parmar

Hon Willow-Jean Prime

Hon Phil Twyford

Mike Butterick participated in our consideration of this petition.

Related resources

The documents we received as evidence in relation to this petition are available on the [Parliament website](#).

A recording of our hearing can be accessed online on the [Parliament website](#).