



New Zealand House of Representatives
Te Whare Māngai o Aotearoa

Petitions Committee

Komiti Whiriwhiri Take Petihana

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Petition of Arthur Anae: Allow Pacific people to enter NZ on a 3-month visitor visa issued on arrival

Presented to the House of Representatives
by Greg O'Connor, Chairperson

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Petition of Arthur Anae

Recommendation

The Petitions Committee has considered the petition of Arthur Anae—Allow Pacific people to enter NZ on a 3-month visitor visa issued on arrival—and recommends that the House take note of its report.

Request regarding visitor visa access for Pacific peoples

This petition was signed by 48,367 people. It was presented to the House by Rt Hon Winston Peters on 11 February 2026, and requests:

That the House of Representatives review the present requirements for Pacific people to enter NZ on a visitor visa, and allow Pacific people to be treated in the same way as people from the 60 plus other countries who are eligible for NZeTAs.

Background

This petition is about immigration access to New Zealand by visitors, which means people who arrive temporarily and do not intend to stay permanently. Most visitors will need a visa or a New Zealand Electronic Travel Authority (NZeTA) before they travel to New Zealand.

People with passports from 61 countries and territories can travel to New Zealand without a visa, so long as they have an NZeTA.¹ These are referred to as visa-waiver countries. People from 130 other countries, including most Pacific nations, must apply for a visa online before they travel to New Zealand.² People from the Cook Islands, Niue, and Tokelau are New Zealand citizens and do not need a visa. Australian citizens can also normally travel to New Zealand without applying for a visa beforehand.

Comments from the petitioner

Mr Anae said that 16 million people from Pacific countries have to apply for a visa before travelling to New Zealand, while 3.2 billion people from visa-waiver countries are eligible to travel to New Zealand and receive a three-month visitor visa on arrival.

The petitioner regards the treatment of Pacific peoples under current immigration settings as unfair and discriminatory. He asks that Pacific peoples be treated “with the same respect, dignity, and equality” as the citizens of other nations.

Difficulties that Pacific people experience when applying for visitor visas

Mr Anae said that the people of the Pacific are New Zealand’s neighbours, but they cannot get here for funerals or other important occasions such as weddings, graduations, and

¹ More information about visa-waiver countries and territories is on the [Immigration New Zealand website](#).

² More information about requirements for Pacific visitors is on the [Immigration New Zealand website](#).

cultural ceremonies. The petitioner said that Pacific travel is rooted in cultural responsibilities and obligations that help define Pacific identity and community life.

The petitioner told us about an incident in which members of a prominent Samoan family applied for visitor visas to attend a funeral in New Zealand. He said they applied 11 days before the funeral and provided a copy of the death certificate. Mr Anae said that, although he personally advocated for the family, one visa was issued only on the day before the funeral, and the second on the day of the funeral itself.

Mr Anae feels this is a typical example of how Pacific peoples are treated. He asked us, “why does New Zealand immigration continue to treat the people of the Pacific this way?” He said he has written to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and other ministers, without receiving a satisfactory response. He said he has told them:

Put your feet in these shoes. You’ve just had a message. Your mother’s died, your father’s died, or your brother or sister’s died. Or your child has died, and you can’t go to the funeral. Wear those shoes and understand the situation that we’re in.

The petitioner said that, until last year, the Immigration New Zealand office in Samoa was open for only one hour a day, which he felt was insufficient for a population of more than 200,000 people. He said that people travelled long distances, sometimes by ferry, only to find the office was closed.

Mr Anae said that the hardship was compounded by expectations that applicants use online systems. He said that many Pacific villages lack reliable internet access and many Pacific people do not have the digital literacy required to navigate online systems. He said that this is not merely inconvenient, but “an affront to the dignity of our people”.

A “second home”

Mr Anae said that New Zealand is a second home for Pacific people. He said that people from the Pacific have been treated as second-class citizens. “There’s less than 16 million of us, and we have to apply for a visa to get here”.

The petitioner asked us:

Why do we have to apply? Why do we have to pay all the money to come? Why do we have to be scrutinised in everything we do? And yet, 3.2 billion people can arrive in this country directly or via Australia. Some we went to war with. Some have done absolutely nothing for us. We came here in the ‘40s, and we contributed to this country, and built this country.

The stigma of the “Pacific overstayer”

Mr Anae’s written submission includes a section by Melani Anae which argues that New Zealand immigration policy has consistently stigmatised Pacific people as overstayers. She notes that the 1970s Dawn Raids targeted Tongans and Samoans. Pacific people accounted for 86 percent of prosecutions at that time, but made up only 30 percent of overstayers. On 1 August 2021, the Government formally apologised to Pacific communities for the Dawn Raids. However, Ms Anae says that “out of hours” immigration compliance visits continued,

as documented in the 2023 Heron report.³ Ms Anae considers the “Pacific overstayer” an enduring but misleading narrative that scapegoats Pacific people living in New Zealand, especially during times of economic hardship.

The petitioner acknowledged that objections to his proposal were based on concerns about overstaying. “That’s what keeps on getting thrown back in our faces continuously is overstaying, overstaying, overstaying.” Mr Anae said that there are currently around 20,000 people in New Zealand who are overstayers. He said 20 percent are Pacific people, which is only 0.078 percent of New Zealand’s population. He asked us, “is that an issue?”

Mr Anae said that overstaying itself has been created by over-restrictive immigration policy. He said that when people have difficult and uncertain access to New Zealand, many would try to remain as long as possible. He said that if people were given easier access and greater freedom to visit lawfully, there would be less incentive to overstay.

The petitioner told us that if Pacific people were able to travel to New Zealand on the same basis as travellers from visa-waiver countries, there would be a flood of arrivals. “When you’ve been held up for so long and going through all the problems that you’ve had to go through, what do you think is going to happen?” However, he believes that the visitors would go home before their visas expired.

Petitioner’s proposals for a visa-waiver Pacific scheme

The petitioner recommended specific measures to go alongside his proposed three-month visitor visa on arrival.

Renewal for a further three months

Mr Anae said that people who depart New Zealand within the authorised three-month period should be eligible to return immediately and be granted a further three-month visa on arrival. He said that would eliminate overstaying.

Deportation period of 10 years for overstaying

The petitioner said that any person who overstays beyond a permitted three-month period should not be allowed back for 10 years. He said that was tough, but “one [person] isn’t going to spoil it for everyone”.

Structured amnesty and voluntary compliance pathway

The petitioner proposes a structured amnesty period that would allow people who are currently overstaying in New Zealand to leave lawfully and have their immigration compliance record restored. Those people would then be granted immediate eligibility to reapply through standard immigration pathways. Mr Anae said this approach would provide a fair compliance solution for long-standing members of the Pacific community who have

³ A review of out of hours immigration compliance activity was undertaken by Michael Heron KC and Jane Barrow in June 2023. The review noted that, although media reports focused on an early morning visit to a Tongan national, few Pacific people have been subject to out of hours compliance activities, with most activities focused on Chinese or Indian nationals. The Heron report is available on [the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment website](#).

established meaningful ties to New Zealand. He said special consideration should be given to overstayers with children born in New Zealand.

Rebuilding trust

The petitioner said that “trust is a critical barrier to engagement” and many Pacific people are reluctant to engage directly with Immigration New Zealand because of fear, uncertainty, or past negative experiences. The petitioner’s proposal for a structured amnesty also includes a recommendation to establish an independent, third-party advisory and support office to provide culturally appropriate guidance, advocacy and reassurance to overstayers. The petitioner said this would empower overstayers to come forward with confidence.

Additional requirements

The petitioner’s written submission suggests that a Pacific visitor visa scheme could require comprehensive travel insurance and a refundable bond of \$1,000 to be paid on arrival in New Zealand. He notes, however, that a refundable bond could be difficult to implement.

Other issues to address immigration compliance

In addition to the specific proposals for a three-month visitor visa on arrival, the petitioner made further recommendations which he said would increase the integrity of the immigration system and compliance with it. These include the following matters.

Registered immigration consultants

Mr Anae said immigration consultants should be registered with Immigration New Zealand. He outlined a scenario for us:

I’ve paid somebody money and believe they’re going to fix my papers. I’m sitting at home waiting. I’ve done my bit. Next thing, I’m an overstayer. I’m going to be deported, and I’ve done everything. So who is to blame for this? Is it the person? Is it a government failing in their own rules?

We note that anyone providing immigration advice in or outside New Zealand must be licensed by the Immigration Advisers Authority.⁴

Passport integrity

The petitioner said that all countries should standardise passports so that official names are strictly aligned with names on birth certificates. He said other names, such as Matai (chiefly) titles, should be documented on an “also known as” page. He said this would reduce the risk of misuse or confusion across immigration systems.

Checks of immigration information by employers

Mr Anae proposed that all employers be required to include verified passport or birth certificate details in employment agreements. He said this information should be securely linked to Immigration New Zealand’s database, and employees should automatically be flagged if they apply for work they are not entitled to carry out.

⁴ Further information about the Immigration Advisers Authority is available on [its website](#).

Comments from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment said that decisions about whether to allow visa-waiver entry to New Zealand for particular nations are guided by a framework agreed to by Cabinet in 2015. Decisions about whether to grant or remove visa-waiver status are made by Cabinet on the recommendation of the Minister of Immigration.

The framework assesses benefits and risks. Risks may include national security concerns, passport security, overstaying, integrity of the system, external “push factors” in the other country, and health and biosecurity risks. Benefits may include enhanced international relationships, trade opportunities, and tourism.

We asked whether any countries have had their visa-waiver status removed but subsequently reinstated. The ministry provided the dates of approval for the 61 states and territories that have visa-waiver status. Of the countries on that list, the Czech Republic was originally approved in 1996, then suspended in 2001 and reinstated in 2003.

The following countries have had their visa-waiver status suspended or cancelled:

Suspended or cancelled visa waivers

Country	Effective	Date suspended/cancelled
Fiji	1 December 1986	18 February 1987
Samoa	1 December 1986	18 February 1987
Tonga	1 December 1986	18 February 1987
Indonesia	1 January 1987	21 October 1998
Thailand	14 November 1987	1 January 2001
Zimbabwe	1 March 2000	21 February 2003
Kiribati	1 December 1986	8 December 2003
Nauru	1 December 1986	8 December 2003
Tuvalu	1 December 1986	8 December 2003
South Africa, Republic of	1 October 1996	21 November 2016

Source: Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

The ministry said that extending visa-waiver status to a country or territory, or withdrawing it from one, is a Cabinet decision because there are implications for international relations.

Previous Pacific visa-waiver programmes

Visa-waiver programmes were introduced in 1986 for Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Samoa, Tonga, and Tuvalu. However, the visa-waiver programmes for Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa were rescinded 10 weeks later in February 1987 due to concerns about compliance and overstaying. The ministry said that, at the time of the 1986 policy, fewer than half of the 5,254 arrivals from Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa left when their visas expired.

We received further information from the Parliamentary Library about the 1986 visa waiver. News reports from the time outlined other difficulties experienced, including the following:

- Some arrivals sought medical treatment or schooling outside of the agreed arrangements with Pacific governments.
- Pacific states lost skilled workers, which caused shortages, such as in the education and health sectors.
- Incorrect information about the policy contributed to four charter flights being organised from Tonga with unsatisfactory return arrangements.
- There were reports that New Zealand Pacific communities felt under pressure to assist with accommodation and work, as well as other forms of support.

The ministry told us that visa-waiver status for Tuvalu, Kiribati, and Nauru was removed in 2003 because of similar concerns about overstaying and compliance.

Overstaying

The ministry said that overstaying continues to be a consideration in visa settings. In 2025, while Pacific people represent between 3 and 4 percent of total arrivals, they make up approximately 25 percent of overstayers.

We asked the ministry whether Pacific people are considered to have a higher risk of overstaying than people from countries such as Germany, America, or China. The ministry said that between July 2023 and June 2025, Tonga and Samoa were the countries with the highest percentage of arrivals who subsequently remained unlawfully in New Zealand.

Number of people who have arrived in New Zealand on a temporary visa between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2025 who have overstayed their visa

Nationality	Total temporary visa arrivals between 1/7/2023 and 30/6/2025	Individuals who arrived between 1/7/2023 and 30/6/2025 and were recorded as having overstayed their visas as of 1/7/2025	Percentage
Tonga	24,425	472	1.93%
Samoa	23,075	382	1.66%
Malaysia	64,865	220	0.34%
Fiji	53,061	163	0.31%
India	222,436	428	0.19%
Canada	115,727	219	0.19%
Great Britain	314,773	504	0.16%
USA	656,684	894	0.14%
Germany	142,802	184	0.13%
China	472,041	369	0.08%
Other	1,313,716	2,018	0.15%
Total	3,403,605	5,853	0.17%

Source: Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

The ministry said that overstaying has flow-on effects. It can lead to increased risk of migrant exploitation, overcrowding, added strain on education and health systems, and financial hardship for people supporting them. The ministry considers that there is a strong rationale for continuing current policy settings.

Recent changes to Pacific immigration settings and services

The ministry said that the Pacific is an important partner for New Zealand. It told us that, while a visa-waiver is one available tool, ministers have considered a wider suite of options that could be introduced. Changes have been made recently to some immigration settings and services with the aim of improving the experience of applying for visas from Pacific countries.

Temporary visa waiver pathway for travel from Australia

Since November 2025, a temporary visa-waiver pathway has been introduced for people travelling from Australia on the passport of a Pacific Island Forum country with an Australian visitor, student, work, or family visa. This is a 12-month trial that allows entry to New Zealand for up to three months.⁵

Two-year multi-entry visitor visas

The ministry said that the Minister of Immigration has instructed Immigration New Zealand to issue multi-entry visitor visas for up to two years as the default for people from Pacific Island Forum countries.

Temporary reduction in visitor visa fees for Pacific nationals

Since 2024, subsidies have been provided to the Pacific Fee Band to keep costs lower for Pacific nationals relative to other countries. In June 2026, visitor visa fees for Pacific nationals were further reduced temporarily from \$216 to \$161.

Improvements to visa application processes

The ministry said that changes have been made to improve the experience of Pacific nationals applying for visas. Examples include the following:

- Visa processing times in Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji have reduced from an average of 12 working days in 2024 to 7 days in 2025, and 6 days in 2026.
- Visa processing branches have been maintained in Tonga and Fiji, and a visa application centre has opened in Samoa.
- Guidance material is provided in multiple Pacific languages.
- A dedicated Immigration New Zealand inbox has been introduced to escalate requests for all visa types, such as requests to attend funerals in New Zealand.

The ministry said that Immigration New Zealand has a Pacific Engagement Plan with Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu that aims to strengthen communications and relationship management. This will include annual visits by senior Immigration New Zealand officials.

⁵ Further information about Pacific visitors travelling from Australia is available on [Immigration New Zealand's website](#).

Our response to the petition

We thank Mr Anae for his petition and acknowledge his advocacy for Pacific peoples within New Zealand and throughout the region. We value the contribution that Pacific people make to New Zealand, and the relationship this country has with Pacific nations.

We acknowledge that because of New Zealand's proximity to, and historical relationships with, Pacific nations, Pacific people have high expectations of New Zealand. We recognise that there are visitors from many different countries who overstay their visas, and that some of these are from visa-waiver countries. We also acknowledge that New Zealanders with overseas relatives from visa-waiver countries would have a different experience of bringing their relatives to New Zealand for occasions such as funerals than would New Zealanders whose relatives are from non-visa-waiver countries. We can understand that some Pacific New Zealanders may feel a sense of unfairness that the visa-waiver scheme is not available to their friends and relatives in Pacific nations.

There are clearly questions of trust on the part of both Pacific communities and New Zealand government decision-makers and agencies. Mr Anae told us that many Pacific people are reluctant to deal directly with Immigration New Zealand because of fear, uncertainty, and past negative experiences. Government decision-makers and agencies, on the other hand, have concerns about overstaying.

We do not consider that concerns about overstaying result only from historic stereotypes. Successive governments have tried to address compliance with visitor visa requirements. Previous attempts to establish visa-waiver schemes ended because of overstaying and compliance concerns. Some decades on from that, in 2025, Tonga and Samoa still had the highest percentage of arrivals who did not depart New Zealand when their visa expired. The petitioner acknowledged that overstaying does occur.

Mr Anae told us that if immigration settings change, overstaying will stop. Some of us believe the opposite may be true: if overstaying stops, immigration settings could change in response.

We note that the latest estimates by Immigration New Zealand of people who have overstayed their visas were released on 15 September 2026.⁶ Of particular relevance to this petition report are the figures relating to Tongan and Samoan nationals. The rate for Tongan nationals has increased to 2.14 percent, and the rate for Samoan nationals has decreased to 1.25 percent. We think that the latter is significant and potentially indicates a material change. However, we do note that, in 2025, Immigration New Zealand introduced updated methodology which affects these estimates.

Some of us think a visa-waiver scheme between New Zealand and Pacific nations will only be possible politically if levels of Pacific overstaying can be reduced, which may already be happening for some Pacific communities. Some of us think that if Pacific communities, both in New Zealand and throughout the region, continue to find ways to stop or reduce immigration transgressions, the New Zealand government would respond in good faith.

⁶ [2026 estimate of people who have overstayed their visa released](#), 15 September 2026, available on the New Zealand Immigration website.

New Zealand Labour Party differing view

Labour's view is that the time has come to re-introduce a visa waiver scheme for Pacific Islands Forum nations, we understand that this is an on-going source of concern for Pacific Island communities both in Aotearoa New Zealand and in other Pacific countries. New Zealand has a specific relationship and deep family ties with Pacific countries and such a waiver would reduce the cost, time spent filling in lengthy sponsorship forms, and the uncertainty of travel.

Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand differing view

The Green Party supports visa waiver access for Pacific nations. While thousands of visitors from countries like Germany and the United Kingdom currently enjoy the benefits of visa-free travel to Aotearoa, our Pacific neighbours do not enjoy the same benefits.

Aotearoa is part of a family of Pacific nations. Pacific people should be able to travel to Aotearoa and visit their friends and family without unfair barriers. This should be done in cooperation with Pacific nations and communities.

Supporting visa waiver access builds on the Dawn Raids apology and the work done in restoring the New Zealand citizenship of Samoans who had their citizenship removed during that time. This will show that New Zealand has learnt from the mistakes of the past and is committed to making meaningful commitments to strengthen the bonds between Aotearoa and the Pacific.

Appendix

Committee procedure

The petition was signed by 48,367 people on the Parliament website. It was presented to the House by Rt Hon Winston Peters on 11 February 2026 and referred to us that day. We met between 23 April and 17 September 2026 to consider it. We received written submissions and heard oral evidence from the petitioner and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. We received advice from the Parliamentary Library.

Committee members

Greg O'Connor (Chairperson)
Hon Andrew Bayly (from 1 July 2026)
Greg Fleming
Paulo Garcia (until 1 July 2026)
Celia Wade-Brown

Related resources

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

Recordings of our hearings can be accessed online on the Parliament website at the following links:

- [Hearing with the petitioner on 30 July 2026](#).
- [Hearing with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment on 27 August 2026 \(from 30:05\)](#).