

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ABOUT NEW ZEALAND'S RESPONSE TO AFGHANISTAN SITUATION

Date: 16/09/2021

General FAQs

Can you provide details of the temporary accommodation that has been supplied by the Government?

For security reasons, and to protect the privacy of these individuals, we will not be giving exact details of the temporary accommodation. However we can confirm that it is not Te Āhuru Mōwai o Aotearoa (the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre).

Why provide temporary accommodation in Auckland when the city is currently battling the Delta outbreak?

We worked closely with relevant Government agencies to find suitable accommodation which would meet the needs of the evacuees at short notice. We consulted with Auckland Regional Public Health Service as part of this decision. The city's services are well equipped to ensure these individuals get the support they need and to continue to help the wider Auckland community curb the spread of the current Delta outbreak. In addition, because all evacuees arrived in Auckland which remains at Alert Level 4 restrictions, Auckland is the most logical option.

Why can't evacuees be housed in Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre?

Te Āhuru Mōwai o Aotearoa (Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre) was not considered as an option for temporary accommodation as it was not available. The Centre is almost at capacity with individuals from the Refugee Quota Programme. These individuals are unable to move into their permanent housing options while Auckland remains at Alert Level 3 and 4.

If evacuees arrived on visitor visas are they able to work? If not, will their transition to a work visa be automatic or will they have to apply for a new visa?

The Government is setting up a new process to allow these individuals to apply for a permanent resident visa. A permanent resident visa means that these individuals will be able to stay in New Zealand indefinitely, and you can work, study, and access public services such as healthcare.

We are still working on the detail of this visa, including when, and how individuals can apply. We will share this information with the individuals as soon as it is confirmed, in the next few weeks. There will be no cost for this application. We are working as quickly as possible to provide you with certainty.

If individuals arrived on a visitor visa, they are not able to work. We encourage those individuals who want to work to contact their Resettlement Case Officer.

How does Immigration New Zealand respond to the claim that so many NZ citizens and residents were in Afghanistan because they were told that it was the only way to travel back to New Zealand with their partners?

Border restrictions remain in place to protect New Zealand from the spread of COVID-19 and most individuals require a border exception to travel to New Zealand. While we are aware that some individuals may have chosen to leave New Zealand in order to bring family back, it is not something that is encouraged by Immigration New Zealand.

Can family members stay in temporary accommodation arranged by the Government if they are already in New Zealand?

At this stage, temporary accommodation is being provided for the evacuees only. In some cases, where families or individuals already have permanent or temporary housing, they can travel to be with their family instead of going to the temporary accommodation.

Stakeholder FAQs

MIQ

Are family members in New Zealand currently able to go and stay in MIQ with family that have been evacuated?

Immigration New Zealand (INZ) is working closely with Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) and other government departments and agencies to make sure the Afghan evacuees get the best possible support while going through managed isolation, including translators and specialist trauma and psychosocial support services.

They will be provided with a pack of information (available in Dari, Farsi and Pashto) upon arrival at a Managed Isolation Facility, including a mobile phone which will enable INZ to provide remote support to the families during their time in managed isolation.

The Refugee and Migrant Services Team within INZ will assign Resettlement Case Officers to each family and individual and will carry out regular checks and provide support and information as required. These Resettlement Case Officers will also work with the evacuees' to determine their ongoing settlement needs including any links (family and friends) they may have in the community and future housing needs.

The Afghan evacuees have the same rights as other Managed Isolation Facility occupants. While the majority of the evacuees so far are in family groups, any of them can raise an exemption request to enable a family member to join them in managed isolation. This process would be supported by facility staff, and by the Refugee and Migrant Services team.

Further information on exemptions to join someone in managed isolation is covered here <https://www.miq.govt.nz/being-in-managed-isolation/exemptions-from-isolation/exemption-to-join-someone-in-managed-isolation/>.

Can you provide community groups with more information about individuals coming into the community and where they will be located? Community groups would like to be able to pass information onto family members who are enquiring about individuals and offer assistance to the Government.

It is not possible to provide information about individuals and where they will be undertaking their period of managed isolation for privacy reasons. We provided contact details to every individual arriving at their Managed Isolation Facility so they can get in touch with the relevant organisations. Most evacuees' have been provided with a mobile phone as part of their welcome pack.

We understand that phones will be provided to the evacuees, what can we do to make sure the phone numbers are passed on to family members so that the families can stay in touch?

Most evacuees will be provided with a mobile phone as part of their welcome pack on arrival at their Managed Isolation Facility. They will then be able to contact their family members or community contacts straight away, as well as on social media. The facility offers free Wi-Fi to facilitate this.

Travel & visas

What options are there for Afghan nationals to get to NZ at the moment?

There has been a multinational humanitarian effort under way to evacuate individuals from Kabul. As you will be aware the situation in Afghanistan is rapidly deteriorating and there was only a small window to undertake evacuations. The New Zealand Defence Force has announced that the evacuation operation from Hamad Karzai International Airport has come to an end.

Afghan nationals who were in Afghanistan on 15 August 2021 and held a valid temporary or resident visa on 19 August 2021 and continue to hold that visa are exempt from border restrictions and may travel to New Zealand. Note that this does not affect the eligibility of those who can already travel to New Zealand under the current border restrictions such as people who hold a partnership based visa or a critical purpose visitor visa.

Will individuals who had Partnership, Dependent Child, or RFSC applications already underway have their applications expedited?

Immigration New Zealand (INZ) has been taking a pragmatic approach to processing visa applications from Afghan nationals currently in Afghanistan, taking into account the uncertain situation there at the moment. INZ has been prioritising applications from Afghan nationals who are the partner or dependents of a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident. This approach has been in line with the Government's focus to assist New Zealand citizens and permanent residents and their immediate family to return to New Zealand.

The ability for people offshore to apply for a visa remains suspended, including for people applying from Afghanistan. However, individuals are still able to request an exception to the current border restrictions. These requests will be prioritised for Afghan nationals who are the partner or dependents of a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident.

The selection of Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for the Refugee Family Support Category (RFSC) is currently paused. This means INZ is not drawing EOIs from the pool and inviting people to apply for

residence at this point in time. As INZ is legally unable to process applications for individuals who are not likely to meet entry requirements, the majority of processing for offshore applicants is on hold. While Immigration Officers continue to process RFSC applications to the point of decision, INZ is unable to decide these applications while these applicants are outside of New Zealand and border restrictions remain in place.

What sort of visas will these Afghan evacuees have?

As well as the evacuation of New Zealand citizens and eligible Afghan nationals from Afghanistan, New Zealand visa holders in Afghanistan are also eligible to enter New Zealand. Changes were made to the entry permission instructions to reflect this and further changes are now made to clarify that they must already have held a visa on 19 August 2021.

These are temporary settings to facilitate the immediate response. These changes do not affect the eligibility of those who can already travel to New Zealand despite the border restrictions such as people who are granted a partnership-based visa or a critical purpose visitor visa.

New visas being granted under the emergency resettlement offer are Critical purpose visitor visas, which allows the individuals to travel to New Zealand despite the border restrictions.

INZ is no longer accepting application for the resettlement offer, however there are still those individuals who helped the NZDF during NZ's deployment but are left behind. Will there be any support/ further consideration for these individuals?

The Government is continuing to work through options for those individuals who might hold a current visa for New Zealand but have not yet been able to travel here.

There are a lot of people whose visas are still waiting in the queue (including those that are not family based), what is happening for these applicants?

The ability for people offshore to apply for a visa remains suspended, including for people applying from Afghanistan. However, individuals are still able to request an exception to the current border restrictions. These requests will be prioritised for Afghan nationals who are the partner or dependents of a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident.

Resettlement

What rights will evacuees have to settlement supports, including MSD, Kainga Ora, and healthcare?

An all of government group has been formed to ensure the evacuees have the support they need to resettle in New Zealand. Conversations are still ongoing with evacuees to determine what support they may require, and this includes support with housing, income, education and access to health care systems.

Will evacuees with family in New Zealand be able to join them after they have completed their 14 days in MIQ?

We are working closely with every evacuee to determine what support they require, including temporary or more permanent housing solutions. Some people have confirmed they will stay with family or community contacts after their stay in MIQ. The Government has arranged temporary

accommodation for those who don't have housing arranged after their stay in MIQ or are unable to travel to their accommodation due to current Alert Level restrictions.

Will the Government pay for the domestic flights for these Afghan evacuees after they complete the 14 days in MIQ? Either to join their family in NZ or to get to their resettlement location.

Transport will be provided for those going into the temporary accommodation provided by the Government.

We will also work closely with those going to permanent or temporary accommodation to ensure they have transport, or help to arrange that if necessary.

For those Afghan evacuees who do not have family in New Zealand, what is the resettlement plan for them after they complete the 14 days in MIQ?

The Government has arranged temporary accommodation for those individuals who need it. We are also working through longer term solutions for housing and support services as needed.

What resettlement supports are available from the government for these Afghan evacuees? And how long will these support be available for?

An all of government group has been formed to ensure the evacuees have the support they need to resettle in New Zealand. Conversations are still ongoing with evacuees to determine what support they may require, and this includes support with housing, income, education and access to health care systems.

What is the overall plan for the physical and mental health of the Afghan evacuees? How are their screening or health needs being addressed?

We have assigned Resettlement Case Officers who are checking in with the evacuees every day to see what support they may need.

We are mindful that these individuals have gone through significant trauma and are being respectful of this as we have conversations about their needs.

While in MIQ, individuals and families have regular health checks from registered nurses. We will also consider opportunities to provide more extensive health assessments once these individuals have finished MIQ.

The Afghan communities in New Zealand are willing to support INZ and government agencies in our response to the situation in Afghanistan, including the resettlement of the incoming Afghan evacuees. What is the best way for the communities to help?

We know that Afghan communities throughout New Zealand will play a critical role in helping the evacuees resettle in in New Zealand. INZ with other government agencies will continue to work directly with local Afghan community groups throughout New Zealand to identify ways that they can support the evacuees' resettlement.

I understand that INZ can't provide information on Afghan individuals coming to New Zealand, but can any numeric information be shared e.g.

*** Number of Afghan nationals coming into each resettlement location and the type of visas they are on;**

*** Number of people coming into NZ from Afghanistan, broken down to NZ citizens/ residents/ temporary visa holders**

To protect their privacy, we are unable to provide a breakdown of visa types and resettlement locations for the individuals who we have evacuated.

When will people be arriving in resettlement locations?

The Government is continuing to work through the resettlement and housing needs for the evacuees.

Some people already have permanent or temporary accommodation with families or communities throughout New Zealand and will be able to travel to permanent or temporary accommodation immediately after their MIQ stay. Others, with no existing connections in New Zealand are being provided with temporary accommodation in Auckland.

Will people with family in a certain location be resettled in that same location?

We have been working closely with the evacuees to identify their needs. Those that have family or community contacts that they are able to stay with are able to travel to be with their family and be supported in the community.

What communication will there be with the Afghan community in resettlement locations about people arriving? When/how will this take place?

We are coordinating with our cross government partners to ensure the Afghan community is engaged and informed as these individuals move to different communities throughout New Zealand.

More detail will be made available once an approach is in place.

What communication will there be with service providers in resettlement locations about people arriving? When/how will this take place?

We are currently looking at options to ensure families are connected to support services in the community, including the best way to connect them with service providers. We will provide an update on this as soon as we are able.

What communication will there be to arriving people from Afghanistan about the supports available to them in resettlement locations? When/how will this take place?

We have assigned Resettlement Case Officers for each person or families, and these Case Officers are working closely with the individuals or families to identify the support they might need. Translated materials are available and each family or person has been given a mobile phone so that they are able to connect with community groups and families.