



Permanent residency for New Zealanders living in Australia

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Are you one of the over half a million New Zealand citizens currently calling Australia home? Have you considered applying to become a permanent resident ('PR')? In this blog, we look at one of the pathways to permanent residency in Australia for New Zealand citizens and explore the requirements around the Skilled Independent (Subclass 189) (New Zealand Stream) Visa for Subclass 444 ('444 visa') visa holders.

Thought you were already an Australian permanent resident?

"But I thought I already was a permanent resident!" I hear you say. Well, that depends on when you arrived.

In February 2001, Australia and New Zealand entered into a new bilateral social security agreement which meant that anyone arriving in Australia since 26 February 2001 needs to apply to become a permanent resident before they can;

- access all social security payments;
- apply to become a citizen; or
- sponsor family members to stay here as permanent residents.

If you were lucky enough to already be here before the cut-off date (26/2/2001), then you're "sweeeet bro". You do not need to apply for PR before you move to apply for Australian Citizenship and/or sponsor your family members to become permanent residents.

Who is eligible for the Special Category Visa Subclass 444?

On entry to Australia, New Zealand passport holders who do not have health concerns or criminal convictions are automatically granted a Special Category Visa Subclass 444 on presenting their NZ passport through immigration clearance.

The pathway to permanent residency for New Zealand citizens residing in Australia prior to February 2016

A specific pathway for New Zealanders to obtain PR was introduced in 2017 by adding eligibility requirements to the Skilled Independent (Subclass 189) Visa through a newly created New Zealand Stream.

It was specifically designed for:

- New Zealanders who were residing in Australia before 19 February 2016; and
- who have been usually resident for at least 5 years before they apply for the visa; and
- who have earned a taxable income at or above the minimum threshold amount for the four prior financial years (currently \$53,900 per annum).

You also have to be able to satisfy the same health, character and security checks that all applicants for PR must complete.

Permanent residency options for New Zealanders who arrived in Australia after February 2016

All other permanent visa options are available to New Zealand citizens if they can satisfy the relevant criteria.

If you are in a relationship with an Australian citizen or permanent resident, then a partner visa could be an option for you. If you have skills that are in demand in Australia, then you could look at the Skilled Independent (Subclass 189) (Points Tested) Visa or an Employer Sponsored Visa.

Benefits of permanent residency in Australia

Only 4,820 New Zealanders took up this option in 2017-2018. Between 2018 and 2020 another 10,500 (approx.) New Zealanders have applied for the 189 (New Zealand Stream) visa. That's a very small percentage of the overall New Zealander population living in Australia.

If you become a permanent resident, you will:

- be able to work and study in Australia;
- enrol in Australia's national health scheme, Medicare;

- sponsor eligible relatives for permanent residence;
- travel to and from Australia (with valid travel permits);
- receive the same social security entitlements as an Australian citizen (after serving any applicable waiting period).

How much does it cost to apply?

The application fee is broken up into two payments. There is a 20% upfront fee at the time of application and the balance is payable before a decision to grant your visa is made.

As of September 2021, the fee is \$4115.00 in total for the main applicant. Additional charges apply for family members included in your application.

How long does the application process take?

Applications take approximately 17 months to be assessed and a visa granted.

Get help

You can learn more about [Hall Payne's migration/immigration services here](#).

If you would like more information about this visa, book an appointment with our qualified migration agent today.

You can contact us by phone or email to arrange your consultation; either face-to-face at one of our offices, by telephone or by videoconference consultation.

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