



GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS

TE KAUNONO TUTARA E TE MANA TIAKI - MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND IMMIGRATION

2 April 2020

COVID 19 – Policy on Permits

The Covid 19 Border restrictions and shutdowns over the last month has necessitated the review of our Permit Policy and application procedures as well as fee waiver consideration. This is to ensure that

- a) visitor permit holders do not become illegal residents as a result of international border closures and inability to leave the Cook Islands
- b) residence, work and entry permit holders do not become illegal residents as a result of employers/spouses who are unable to pay for permits due to business closure/employment termination as a result of COVID 19 measures
- c) employers directly affected by COVID 19 Immigration requirements are provided leeway and flexibility in extending permits without breaching Immigration requirements
- d) financial relief for 2 months is provided
- e) continue processing permit applications as requested by employers and residents to maintain foreign workers legal status.

Definitions

Visitor permit	is issued to a non-Cook Islander/Permanent residence who is in the Cook Islands for rest and relaxation for up to 90days for NZ passport holders and 31 days for all other passport holders
Work permit	non Cook Islander/Permanent resident person who resides in the Cook Islands for employment/Business purposes
Residence	non Cook Islander/Permanent resident person who is living in the Cook Islands due to their being in a relationship with a Cook Islander or Permanent resident. Work permitted.
Entry Permit	Non Cook Islander/Permanent residence person who is a spouse/child/other family member of a person on a work permit. No work permitted
Cook Islands status	Endorsement confirming that the person fits the definition of Cook Islander under the ERD Act
Permanent Resident	A person upon whom the Cook Islands has conferred the status of Permanent resident of the Cook Islands
Illegal resident	A person residing in the Cook Islands without receiving any of the permits above or whose permits have expired

Fee and process

Current fee structure pre 24/03/2020	New fee structure effective 01/04/20	process
\$40.00 per month \$20.00 application fee \$250.00 variation fee if transferring from one employer to another	April and May 2020 – fee waiver for all permits No transfer fee for temporary 3 month requests from COVID-19 applications	All visitor permits expired in March/ April to be endorsed to May 24 without fee charges.
		All work/residence/entry permits expired in March/April to be endorsed to May 24 without charge.
Permits expired prior to March 24	Payment of full fee costs to 24 th March 2020	Endorsement of passport until May 24 2020
Request to extend permit for one year as per normal process	Payment \$420.00 = \$400.00 per annum + \$20 application fee	Endorsement of passport until same date 2021
Request for employer transfer under Covid 19 arrangements	Transfer fee is waived, no monthly fee, waiver form signed by both employers	Endorsement of work permit under new employer for 3 months
Request for transfer for a full year from one employer to another	Transfer fee \$250.00 + \$420.00 is required. repatriation guarantee provided and bond required if individual/small business request	Endorse permit for one year under new employer
Expired permits and unpaid fees	Any expired permits are required to be paid in full up to 24 th March at the normal rate \$500.00 per annum. Eg. If permit was for Jan 01/19 to Jan 01/20 – fee of \$500.00 for preceding year and Jan/feb/March 2020– \$120.00 plus application fee of \$20.00	Expired Fees are paid in full, endorse to May 24 without charging fee.
All other fees remain the same	Cook Islands Status, permits for children, renewal of PR endorsements and Cook Islands Residency.	Receive fee and endorse passport.
Bond refund requests	Bonds will not be refunded unless permit holder is transferred to another employer and bond is received	The request for Bonds is to assist with repatriation of the worker at the end of their contract. COVID 19 border restrictions has affected the person's ability to

		be repatriated and therefore bond will not be reimbursed.
Fees to be paid directly into bank account via the details below Bank of South Pacific – BSP Bank, Cook Islands Account: 0127107401 Reference: MFAI (Surname of Employee), (First initial). Employers to send Immigration evidence of a deposit, so receipt confirmation can be made with MFEM.		

Please note that this policy is backdated to the 24th of March 2020.



Meitaki maata