



A guide to community services for New Zealanders in Australia



Background

New Zealanders coming into Australia, whether or not they are aware of it, are given a visa on arrival – subclass 444 Special Category Visa (SCV). Prior to 2001, New Zealanders arriving in Australia on SCVs were classed as ‘protected’ SCV holders, had full access to social security, and could obtain citizenship without first being granted a permanent residence visa. This changed from 26 Feb 2001. New Zealanders arriving after that date are now classified as ‘non-protected SCV holders’.

While allowing New Zealanders to stay in Australia indefinitely, the non-protected SCV is a temporary, not a permanent visa and does not give New Zealanders access to the full range of social security benefits enjoyed by Australian citizens and permanent residents if they do not also hold Australian citizenship.

The information in this guide refers chiefly to the services available to New Zealanders arriving after 26 Feb 2001 (i.e., to those classified as non-protected SCV holders).

Update

The Department of Home Affairs announced recently that from 1 July 2024, changes to citizenship eligibility for some New Zealand citizens holding a Special Category (subclass 444) visa will apply. This will enable eligible NZ citizens to obtain Australian citizenship, and full access to the associated benefits, without first having to obtain a permanent visa.

More information on this can be found at [Direct pathway to Australian citizenship for New Zealand citizens](#).

 <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/news-media/archive/article?itemId=1047>.

Children born in Australia

The children of New Zealanders born in Australia are not Australian citizens; they are NZ citizens and take on the visa status of their parents. If born in Australia after 26 February 2001, they are non-protected SCV holders.

After 10 years of residence in Australia, a child born in Australia can claim Australian citizenship, which gives them full access to all the benefits of citizenship.

Primary and secondary school education

New Zealand citizens are regarded as local students and are therefore entitled to **free public schooling in all states and territories**. This includes access to school disability support on the same basis as all other local students.



National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

To access the NDIS, a person must be an Australian citizen, hold a permanent visa or be a protected SCV holder. This means that New Zealand citizens who arrived in Australia after 26 February 2001 **are not eligible for NDIS**.

The NDIS is partially funded through the Medicare levy applied to taxable income. New Zealanders residing in Australia are required to pay the Medicare levy. This has led to the complaint that while New Zealanders residing in Australia as non-protected SCV holders are responsible for partially funding the NDIS through the Medicare levy, they are not entitled to access its services.

Health care

New Zealanders who are residing in Australia are eligible for Medicare and can be issued with a Medicare card upon presentation of documentation proving residence. New Zealand citizens lawfully residing in Australia must also pay the Medicare levy and the Medicare levy surcharge (if their income is above the base income threshold and they do not have an appropriate level of private patient hospital cover).

Under Australia's Reciprocal Health Care Agreement with New Zealand, New Zealand residents visiting Australia are also entitled to services as public patients in a public hospital for medically necessary treatment and some prescription medicines under the PBS. They are also eligible for the Private Health Insurance Rebate if they purchase eligible health cover during their stay and meet the income test.

Health Care Cards and Commonwealth Seniors Health Card

Non-protected New Zealanders are entitled to a Low-Income Health Care Card subject to

- a means test
- four years residence.

This provides access to

- medicines under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)
- some government and other concessions.

In **some** circumstances, e.g. if receiving the Family Tax Benefit, the waiting period may be waived.

Non-protected New Zealanders who are over age pension age, not in receipt of pension payments and who have resided in Australia for four years may qualify for a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card (CSHC). This provides access to discounted medicines under the PBS, transport and other concessions.



Other social security entitlements for 'non-protected' SCV holders

Residency requirement

To be considered an Australian resident for social security purposes, a person must reside in Australia and be:

- an Australian citizen, or
- the holder of a permanent visa, or
- a 'protected' SCV holder.

Non-protected SCV holders

New Zealanders who are non-protected SCV holders and who intend to live in Australia indefinitely are only eligible for certain Social Security payments under certain conditions.

Pensions and carer payments

Under Australia's international social security agreement with New Zealand, New Zealand citizens living in Australia can apply for the Australian Age Pension (if they have reached pension age), Disability Support Pension (**DSP**), if they are severely disabled, and Carer Payment (if they are caring for a partner on DSP) irrespective of whether they are protected or non-protected SCV holders. There are certain residency and other qualifications applying to these payments. Reciprocal arrangements apply in relation to certain New Zealand payments.

WARNING

People who acquired NZ citizenship after they acquired their disability are generally NOT eligible for DSP in Australia. Hence, a person with Down syndrome who was not a NZ citizen at birth, but who acquired NZ citizenship later in life, then moved to Australia, is a non-protected SCV holder but is NOT entitled to the same DSP – unlike people with Down syndrome who were NZ citizens at birth.

Family assistance payments

Non-protected New Zealanders are eligible for all family assistance payments under the same conditions as Australian citizens. These benefits include:

- Family Tax Benefit (FTB)
- Child Care Subsidy
- Double Orphan Pension and Parental Leave Pay (including Dad and Partner pay).

In some circumstances, those receiving FTB may be eligible for Rent Assistance.



Allowance payments

Non-protected New Zealanders who have lived in Australia continuously for at least ten years may be able to access a one-off payment of Job Seeker payment (from 20 March 2020) or Youth Allowance.

Disaster payments

Non-protected New Zealanders are not generally eligible for disaster payments, although one-off ex gratia payments have been made for major disasters.

Where can I find more information?

Find out about Australian citizenship and migration on the Department of Home Affairs website here:

 <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/>

Find a list of registered migration agents on the Australian Government OMARA website here:

 <https://portal.mara.gov.au/search-the-register-of-migration-agents/>

Get in touch with **your state Down syndrome association** to find out about supports and services and to connect with other people and families in your area.

Contact Down Syndrome Australia for general information about migration and supporting someone with Down syndrome in Australia.

 www.downsyndrome.org.au  info@downsyndrome.org.au

What support is available?

While there may be some supports available for New Zealanders, it can be state-dependent and it may also change quickly. Get in touch with your state or territory Down syndrome association for advice about services and supports in your area.

Call the national number **1300 881 935**.

Find your local association on our website

 <https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/about-us/our-federation/>



Disclaimer

This information was prepared for Down Syndrome Australia in November 2021 and is taken largely from Susan Love and Michael Klapdor, *New Zealanders in Australia: a quick guide*, Parliament of Australia, 13 Feb 2020, available in full at



https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1920/Quick_Guides/NewZealandersInAustralia

It was supplemented with information from Australian Government Human Service sites.

All these notes are general in nature, may not reflect the latest changes, and **should not be taken as a definitive guide to individual circumstances.**

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