

To: Minister Michael Wood  
Minister Stuart Nash

Via E-mail

15<sup>th</sup> September 2022,

Dear Ministers,

Re: the shortage of labour across many business sectors

Business North Harbour (BNH) operates the North Harbour Business Improvement District (BID) in Auckland which has a membership of 4,500 property owners and businesses who between them employ around 35,000 people. The BID sits within the Upper Harbour Local Board area which contributed over \$7 billion in GDP to the NZ economy last year.

The positive news delivered on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> September, that the Traffic Light System was to be scrapped, most restrictions and mandates were to be lifted and isolation for household contacts testing negative was no longer required, was welcomed across the business sector. Unfortunately, one of the long-standing issues facing many businesses across most if not all sectors, the shortage of labour, continues to adversely affect many business' ability to operate at optimum capacity. This means that any business caught up in this issue is still in survival mode at a time when most believed that they would be well on their way to securing a financially sustainable future, despite the best efforts of the pandemic to prevent this from becoming a reality.

BNH acknowledges the fact that our borders have opened up for migrant workers and there have been changes to visas, timeframes and qualification criteria to speed up the immigration process, but the latest information from Immigration New Zealand (up to 18 months to process Resident Visa applications, up to 36 months to process Skilled Migrant Visas, over 30,000 Tourist Visas waiting to be processed) simply proves that something else needs to be done to enable willing workers and where appropriate their families, to enter or remain in NZ.

I mention the Tourist Visas because the sooner travellers can arrive in NZ the sooner their spend can boost the economy. The businesses who benefit from this increased income may then be in a position to offer more attractive salaries to potential employees, hopefully leading to some of the vacant roles in that sector being filled.

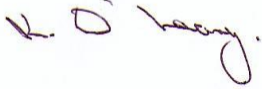
Put simply, businesses need access to more people, more quickly. We are asking the Government for more assistance to improve this accessibility before it is too late for many more businesses who simply can't survive indefinitely without the requisite number of employees.

On behalf of our members, I am writing to ask the Government to urgently consider what else can be done to ease this burden which threatens the very existence of many businesses. Can more government workers be redeployed to assist with immigration as they were to assist with COVID-related tasks such as contact tracing?

Whilst the health and wellbeing of our population has been and remains of paramount importance, the health and wellbeing of many business owners is being severely compromised because of the additional stress brought about by this ongoing and serious issue. I would ask the Government to take urgent action to help mitigate the effects of the labour shortage for the benefit of everyone affected and the country as a whole.

Thank you and I look forward to your response.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'K. O'Leary'.

Kevin O'Leary  
General Manager Business North Harbour