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Kevin O'Leary

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Kia ora Kevin,

Firstly, I just wanted to apologise for the delay with this reply. I have been overseas for an international conference in Rwanda for the past few weeks. Thank you for taking the time to write to me. I have confirmed that Minister Wood and Minister Nash have received your correspondence, and will be in touch. If they have not already please let me know and I can follow up.

Workforce shortages are a global issue, affecting business across the world. However, I would like to share with you some positive news that I hope will be welcomed by Business North Harbour.

Not too long ago we announced the Immigration Rebalance, a significantly simplified immigration process that provides faster processing for businesses. This has introduced a new Green List, which includes over 85 hard to fill roles created to attract and retain high-skilled workers to fill skill shortages. We have allowed areas such as hospitality to have lesser wage thresholds because we recognise the pressure they have and we want to ease that and continue to make it easier to bring in staff.

The new Accredited Employer Work Visa system is also now fully up-and-running. Under this streamlined system, your members won't need to provide as much information, and most of them will be able to use their existing recruitment processes to meet the job check criteria to prove no New Zealanders are available to fill their vacancy. The application process is entirely online, and Immigration New Zealand will use publicly available information, or information it holds, to save businesses' time and speed up the process. Many hospitality and tourism roles will be eligible for this exemption to the median wage, with a lower wage threshold of \$25 per hour until April 2023.

In addition to this, we've also approved 29,824 visas for working holidays at the time of writing this letter. Of course, these people make their own plans but, we can expect those who hold working holiday visas to arrive here in New Zealand over the next while.

Thank you again for writing to me. I will continue to work with my colleagues to consider what else can be done to ease this burden for our business sector.

Ngā mihi,

**Vanushi Walters | MP for Upper Harbour**

