

Hon Andrew Little

Minister of Defence
Minister for the Public Service
Minister of Immigration
Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations
Minister Responsible for the NZSIS
Minister Responsible for the GCSB
Lead Coordination Minister for the Government's Response to the Royal Commission's
Report into the Terrorist Attack on the Christchurch Mosques



24 August 2023

MPOL 186

Hamimah Ahmat and Jane Parfitt
Chair and Co-Chair
CIBoard@msd.govt.nz

Dear Hamimah and Jane,

Thank you for your letters to the previous Minister of Immigration of 16 December 2022 and 18 April 2023, summarising the key immigration issues facing the families directly affected by the 15 March 2019 Christchurch terrorist attacks and seeking support to find solutions to these issues. I apologise for the length of time it has taken for this response.

The Government acknowledges the stress and anxiety in the affected community. Responding to this stress has been at the forefront of the Government's decision to provide immigration pathways and support to victims of the attacks and their families. In particular, the Christchurch Response (2019) permanent resident visa (CPRV) was created to ensure that affected families who were normally resident in New Zealand had certainty about their immigration status in New Zealand. These members include 12 groups of widows/widowers and dependent children – nine who were eligible for CPRV and three who were not eligible. All three groups who were not eligible for the CPRV were granted resident visas (including waived fees of around \$3,000) following Ministerial consideration and have since been able to receive their PRVs. I am not proposing to retrospectively reimburse the \$240 fee for the PRVs for the three groups, who were outside the scope of the original CPRV parameters agreed on by Cabinet.

In total, including grants of resident visas under Ministerial discretion, this Government has provided residence pathways to more than 400 people. The Government also removed the potential barrier of minimum residency requirements for affected families to enable access to main benefits and student support entitlements.

Although the CPRV closed to new applications from 24 April 2021, affected families may still choose to write to my office to request ministerial consideration of their case, which may be considered by me in my absolute discretion. The Christchurch Response Immigration Advice Pool has provided funding for immigration advice associated with this need.

I am aware that some members of the affected community still have immigration needs and that there are fewer licensed immigration advisors who are still actively providing services to the community through the Pool. I expect that there is no easy solution to this, although I can assure you that Ministerial submissions will continue to be given careful consideration. Requests for ministerial intervention do not need to be submitted by a licensed immigration advisor and affected community members can represent themselves. While I cannot

guarantee the outcome of any individual request made to me, past Ministerial decisions have considered factors such as where people have a lack of immediate family support and a genuine need for help and assistance. I have asked officials from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment to provide guidance on how the affected community can represent themselves and for this information to be shared with case managers from the Ministry of Social Development in the next month or so.

Finally, I agree that it is important for affected families to have access to whānau support during the upcoming Coronial Inquiry. I also understand that having certainty over visa processing timeframes in this context will help to alleviate stress and anxiety for the affected community. Now that borders are open, families will be able to access this support through standard immigration channels, such as visitor visas. This is in contrast with the situation for the trial in 2020, when borders were closed, and a special border exception was required. INZ is working closely with the Ministry of Justice and Victim Support to manage the visitor visa applications of supporting family members to ensure that affected families have access to the support they need. However, I encourage the community to assist by ensuring the family members' applications are made well in advance of October. Regarding permanent family support, I consider that the combination of CPRV and the granting of residence by Ministerial special directions have facilitated considerable family reunification for the community, and that standard immigration channels are most appropriate for any further permanent family support.

I want to acknowledge the important work the Collective Impact Board is doing in providing an effective bridge between government and the affected community.

Thank you for writing and take care.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew Little". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hon Andrew Little MP
Minister of Immigration