

22 Apr 2023

Direct pathway to Australian citizenship for New Zealand citizens from 1 July 2023

On 22 April 2023, the **Australian Government announced** a direct pathway to Australian citizenship for New Zealand citizens living in Australia.

From 1 July 2023, New Zealand citizens who have been living in Australia for four years or more will be eligible to apply directly for Australian citizenship. **They will no longer need to first apply for and be granted a permanent visa.** These changes apply to New Zealand citizens holding a Special Category (subclass 444) visa (SCV) who arrived in Australia after 26 February 2001. Protected SCV holders will continue to be eligible to apply directly for Australian citizenship.

For New Zealand citizens who are long-term residents in Australia, this will be achieved by backdating their period of permanent residence for citizenship purposes. This will allow them to meet the 12-month permanent residence period under the general residence requirement.

The general residence requirement for Australian citizenship by conferral is set out in the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007*. To meet the general residence requirement **an applicant must be lawfully present in Australia for four years, including 12 months as a permanent resident, immediately before the date of application.**

With effect from 1 July 2023:

- All New Zealand citizens holding an SCV will be considered permanent residents for citizenship purposes.
- New Zealand citizens granted an SCV before 1 July 2022 will have their period of permanent residence for citizenship purposes backdated to 1 July 2022.
- **New Zealand citizens granted an SCV for the first time on or after 1 July 2022 will be considered a permanent resident for citizenship purposes from the date of their SCV grant.**

The above provisions will apply to New Zealand citizens in Australia. It will also apply to New Zealand citizens who are overseas, but held an SCV immediately before last leaving Australia.

These provisions will not apply to citizenship applications submitted before 1 July 2023. If you submit your citizenship application before this date, and you do not meet the eligibility requirements, we will refuse your application and you will not be entitled to a refund.

For further information regarding these changes, check our website regularly. Check on the day you apply to confirm your **eligibility**.

The backdating of permanent residence for SCV holders will also impact children born to SCV holders. From 1 July 2023, any child born in Australia on or after 1 July 2022 to an SCV holder may automatically acquire Australian citizenship at birth. From 1 July 2023, children who meet these circumstances can apply for **evidence of citizenship**.

These changes will deliver on the commitment made by the Prime Minister in July 2022 to ensure viable pathways to Australian citizenship for New Zealand citizens living in Australia. This reflects the close ties between our two nations and highlights the positive contribution New Zealand citizens make to Australia.

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