

Faster visas for island workers

DIANA WORTHY

Priority processing is to be given to migrant visa applications for work on Auckland's Waiheke Island.

The news comes from Auckland Central MP Nikki Kaye.

She contacted Immigration Minister Hon Michael Woodhouse about concerns from the island's hospitality business owners, after meeting 15-strong group of them in June 2017.

The restaurant and vineyard owners said they were facing the prospect of losing highly skilled staff when their visas expired.

And they were worried migrant workers would not be eligible for long-term residency under the new rules.

The group said labour shortages already affected the hospitality and tourism industry on Waiheke.

It would not be helped by the changes to the Skilled Migrant Category Visa.

Government believes the changes, which took effect on August 28 2017, will help create a balance between enabling access to migrant labour and ensuring New Zealanders with comparable skills get the work.

The Minister said, in a written response to Kaye, he had asked officials to provide advice on how any labour shortages could be



MP Nikki Kaye has received a response from the Immigration Minister offering help over visas.

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addressed and to ensure Waiheke employers were not adversely impacted by labour shortages during the tourist season.

Immigration officials have told Woodhouse holiday makers will be informed about the opportunities for work in the region.

Priority processing will be given to visa applications for summer employment on Waiheke.

These will be approved within 10 working days where applications do not require any further information.

"This priority processing will be implemented shortly," Woodhouse's letter said.

An immigration relationship manager, Carl Andrews, will visit the island and work with Waiheke employers.

He will explore how to link

migrant workers to employ needs and provide advice on tiating the immigration process smoothly.

Finally, a multi-emp Approval in Principle for sp occupations on Waiheke Is will be considered.

Migrant workers paid \$48,859 a year are allowed a t year visa, before they're forced to leave New Zealand for 12 mo

Warning over looming water shortage

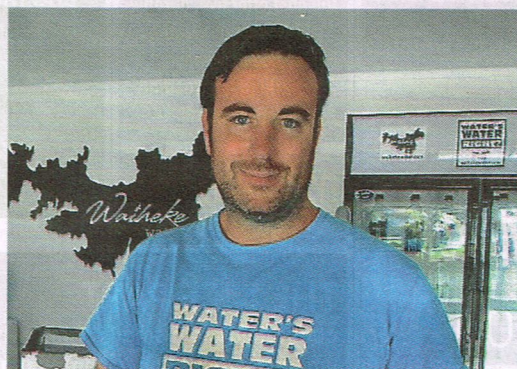
Waiheke could face a water crisis this summer, because a major water delivery company is unlikely to open in time.

Waiheke Aquifers owner Jesse Ball had to close his businesses on Tahurangi Road in Ostend after they were flooded with waist-deep water during heavy rain in March and April.

Ball had hoped to open before the dry season begins, but delays with insurance have slowed the process, he said.

"Generally, we are going to end up in a crisis, where there's not enough water for the tourists and residents," Ball said.

Waiheke Aquifers, which runs Only Water, Waiheke Water and Waiheke Imperial, was producing about 250,000 litres of water a day. The com-



Waiheke Aquifers owner Jesse Ball is worried the island could run out of water this summer. STUFF

pany has 40 to 50 per cent of the quota for taking drinking water from bores on the island.

"The other companies will be doing everything they can, but there's only so much they can do."

The floods caused between \$2 million and \$3 million of damage

to his water delivery business.

Ball hopes to open again in January or February next year. But he warns a dry spell could hit at any time, as it does most years.

While residents are used to conserving water, many accommodation and food business get

water delivered once or twice a day in summer, he said.

Ball is pleased Auckland Council has acknowledged its refuse transfer station in Ostend has blocked the natural flow of stormwater and contributed to the severe flooding of Tahurangi Road businesses.

"Councils don't usually admit to that stuff. The fact they have done something about it is really good."

The council's Healthy Waters department is planning to spend about \$3 million creating a new drain down the side of the transfer station. The open drain would be about five metres wide and allow stormwater to more easily flow from the industrial area to the sea, Healthy Waters strategy team manager Claudia Hellberg said.