

NZ tradies trickle into \$11,000 'Build a Life in Western Australia' scheme



Western Australia wants help building homes. (Image: Supplied)

The Western Australian state government has approved payments for 14 skilled New Zealand workers under a scheme to encourage tradies to move west.

The Build a Life in Western Australia (WA) incentive, designed to lure building and construction professionals and tradespeople from across Australia and NZ to the former's largest state, kicked off on Jan 1.

The scheme offers an upfront A\$5,000 (NZ\$5,461) payment when employment is secured and a further A\$5,000 payment after six months.

A spokesperson for the WA state government told BusinessDesk that 97 skilled NZers had submitted a claim for the programme as of March 14.

Of the 97 claims received, 14 had been approved for the upfront payment, 67 were being assessed, and 16 had been assessed as ineligible for the programme.

"New Zealand citizens comprise 22% of the total number of claims submitted for the Build a Life in WA incentive," the spokesperson said.

'Is the grass really greener?'

When the policy was announced in November, WA Premier Roger Cook said the state increased the net to include NZ because it needed to build more homes.

"Whether it's training locals or encouraging skilled professionals to venture west, my Government is doing everything possible to get more boots on the ground so we can get homes built sooner.

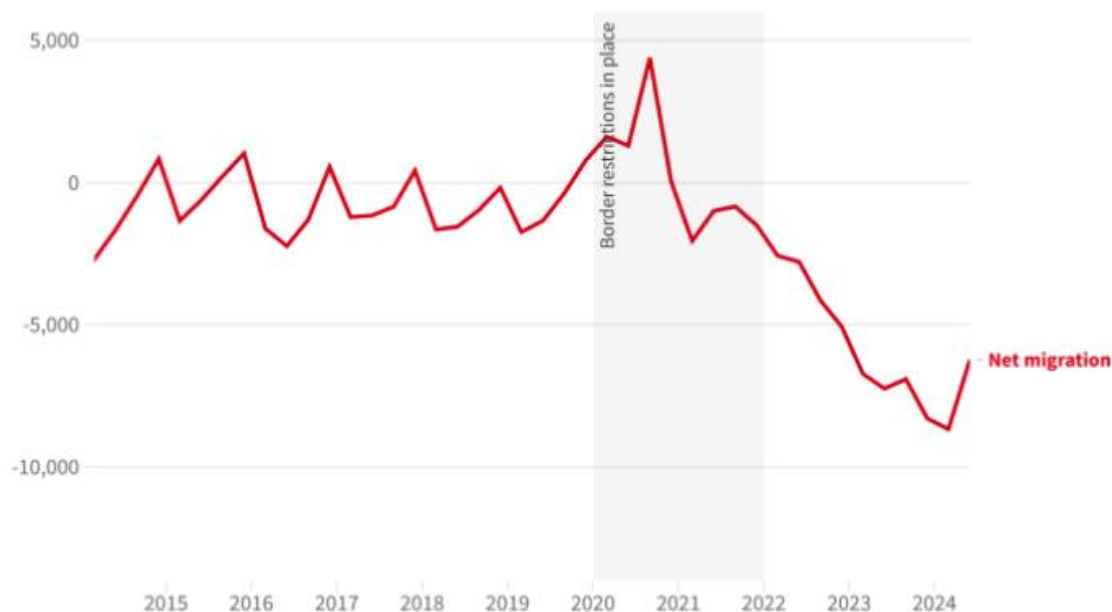
"With our strong economy, secure employment and great lifestyle, it's an exciting time to live and work in WA, and we look forward to welcoming tradies and building professionals from all over Australia and NZ to the best state."

NZ Certified Builders Association (NZCB) chief executive Malcolm Fleming said benefits to NZers included getting life experience and upskilling on large construction projects currently in short supply locally.

"There's a range of reasons that people go overseas ... We certainly wish that they'd come back to us with that experience down the track."

Net departures to Australia have increased since Covid-19

Net migration from Australia to New Zealand, 2014 to 2025.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Graphic: Gregor Thompson/BusinessDesk



Fleming said a lack of work in the national infrastructure pipeline meant NZ was losing engineers and tradies alike, but \$11,000 was not much money, and the WA climate "is not for everyone".

Professional groups such as Engineering NZ and the Association of Consultants and Engineers have recently made [similar comments about people leaving NZ](#) because of a lack of work in the market.

However, figures compiled by the Infrastructure Commission show the long-term pipeline of work is growing. As of last December, NZ had \$107.9 billion of work in planning or delivery with an identified funding source.

A report commissioned by Waihanga Ara Rau, the Workforce Development Council for Construction and Infrastructure, was released in October last year and drew mixed conclusions about whether moving to Australia was beneficial.

The *Is The Grass Really Greener?* report found that Australia was more attractive to individuals without children in the early stages of their careers, but the advantages diminished as they progressed.

“Recent changes in the relative house price to income ratios of each country have recently made purchasing a house in NZ more affordable compared to Australia, providing a further incentive for individuals to return after a period of accumulating wealth in Australia,” the report said.

Not exceptional

The WA state Government's efforts to entice NZers are not the only example of Australian state and private actors facilitating pathways to employment.

Individual incentives worth A\$9,000, plus relocation support, are available for all qualified NZ early childhood teachers who move to Victoria.

Since November 2021, relocation assistance of up to A\$2,000 has been available for citizens and Working Holiday Maker visa applicants from NZ when they relocate to take up short-term agricultural work.

Charities have also proposed similar schemes.

In October, aged care provider Mercy Community announced last year it would offer nurses A\$5,000 in relocation assistance, free accommodation, a A\$5,000 sign-on bonus, and immigration or visa support.

About the author



Gregor Thompson

Markets Reporter

gregor.thompson@nzme.co.nz