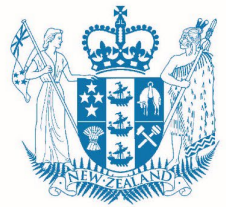


Hon Erica Stanford

Minister of Education
Minister of Immigration
Lead Coordination Minister for the Government's Response
to the Royal Commission's Report into Historical Abuse in
State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions



8 June 2026

MPOL 117

Rachael Pates
rachael@uwen.org.nz

Dear Rachael,

Thank you for your email of 8 April 2026 to Hon Cameron Brewer requesting greater clarity about how conditions affect migrants who want to volunteer. Your correspondence has been passed to me to respond to as this matter falls within my responsibilities as the Minister of Immigration.

I want to acknowledge the important role community organisation, like yours, play. They make a real difference in supporting local environmental outcomes and people, including migrants, foster connections in their communities.

I understand your, and the wider volunteering community's, concerns. While most organisations operate on a good faith, genuinely voluntary basis, immigration settings need to account for situations where volunteer arrangements are used to get around employment and immigration law. These settings are designed to help protect migrants from exploitation.

Under the Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV), New Zealand's main temporary work visa, 'gain or reward' is defined broadly and can include non-monetary benefits such as accommodation, goods, or services. This helps Immigration New Zealand (INZ) identify situations where benefits are substituting paid employment. At the same time, there is a difference between working in exchange for meaningful benefits and such things as receiving light refreshments as a part of volunteering.

These rules are intended to address more serious or ongoing arrangements that undermine immigration law or may be detrimental to a migrant's wellbeing. They are not intended to discourage migrants from taking part in genuine community activities, like volunteering or for local community or charitable organisations.

I appreciate your suggestion that this be clarified and have asked INZ to consider whether wording to this effect could be placed on their website.

Thank you for writing and take care.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Erica Stanford'.

Hon Erica Stanford
Minister of Immigration