

11 February 2025

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Tēnā koe

Thank you for your email of 17 December 2024, transferred from the Ministry of Justice on 20 December 2024, in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

I have repeatedly asked for the Visa, Path to Citizenship and Immigration attached to the GCC-FTA

*I have informally asked several Ministers and was referred to mfat
mfat replied advising they weren't able to give me this information until after the agreement had been signed.*

I then formally asked MP Todd McClay, his office advised me that mfat do have the information.

I again emailed mfat asking for the precise details, to date I haven't received any acknowledgement from them at all.

Minister McClays office has confirmed mfat have the information, but mfat will not release it to me, or the public in general.

This is a matter of public information deliberately being withheld and certainly of great interest to citizens of NZ.

Background

On 4 November 2024, you contacted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (the Ministry) with the following questions and statements:

1. *I would like you to confirm that there is NO part of the trade deal with GCC that allows for immigration, study or any other visa agreements with these countries, that this is strictly trade of product/produce.*

2. *Are you considering any immigration, study or any other visa agreements with these countries in the future?*

3. *What are the guardrails/timeline around 'temporary entry commitments' listed under Trade in Services - <https://www.mfat.govt.nz>.*

5. *Please advise me of 1 country where Muslims/Islamists have arrived en masse and have not destroyed it.*

4. You can sign all the trade deals you want, but if you destroy the culture and integrity of New Zealand.. is it worth it to you?.

Bahrain - Approx 81.2% of population are **Muslim**

United Arab Emirates - **Islam** is the largest and the official state religion of the

Saudi Arabia - 85–90% of citizens are **Sunni Muslims**, while 10–12% are **Shia Muslims**

Oman - The state religion of the Sultanate is **Islam**

Qatar - **Islam** is the official religion

Kuwait - The state religion is **Islam**

On 7 November 2024, the Ministry responded with the following:

In the NZ-GCC FTA, both parties agreed to commitments regarding the movement of natural persons seeking entry to supply a service. These commitments will give our service suppliers and exporters access to the GCC services market – one of the fastest growing components of the overall GCC market.

As is New Zealand's standard practice, all commitments are limited to certain activities or sectors, and contain appropriate safeguards to ensure those accessing these trade commitments are doing so legitimately, and to protect the New Zealand labour market by ensuring New Zealand labour and employment standards are met.

While we are unable to disclose the exact details of the commitments until after signature, you can get a good sense of what commitments New Zealand has made, as well as the safeguards employed, by looking at recent, similar agreements – including the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement and the Australia, ASEAN, New Zealand FTA (AANZFTA).

On 7 November 2024, you followed up with some additional queries:

Q. Does this mean that as part of a trade deal, you have also agreed to allow people from GCC member countries, migrate to New Zealand?

Q. What is the 'quota' you have agreed to per annum to enter into the New Zealand labour market?

Q. What are the visa conditions for GCC member specific countries?

Q. Did New Zealand really agree to set similar allowances/conditions for people coming from GCC countries, as you would for people coming from Australia?

On 8 November 2024, the Ministry responded to your queries:

New Zealand's free trade agreements do not include commitments regarding nationality, citizenship, residence or employment on a permanent basis. Any commitments relating to the temporary entry of natural persons are specifically for the purpose of supplying a service and are time-limited in their nature.

We are unable to provide precise details on any specific commitments made, or conditions that may be attached to each temporary entry commitment. However,

as noted below, when making temporary entry commitments, New Zealand employs safeguards and conditions to ensure the market is protected.

As stated, we are unable to disclose the exact details of the commitments until after signature. However, you can get a good sense of what commitments New Zealand has made, as well as the safeguards employed, by looking at recent, similar agreements – including the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement and the Australia, ASEAN, New Zealand FTA (AANZFTA).

While it is correct to say that New Zealand would be giving citizens of the GCC member states similar temporary entry commitments as we gave citizens of Australia and ASEAN member states through AANZFTA, this should not be confused with the enhanced levels of access Australian citizens enjoy through the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement (TTTA).

The TTTA is an arrangement between Australia and New Zealand which allows for the free movement of citizens of one of these countries to the other, and only applies to New Zealand and Australian citizens. None of New Zealand's other FTAs (including those to which Australia is a Party, such as AANZFTA) contain similar commitments as the TTTA.

On 13 November 2024, you contacted the Minister for Trade and Investment to complain about the Ministry's response to your questions.

Response to your request

As previously noted in our correspondence of 7 and 8 November 2024, New Zealand's Free Trade Agreements do not include commitments regarding nationality, citizenship, residence, or employment on a permanent basis. Any commitments relating to the temporary entry of natural persons are specifically for the purpose of supplying a service and are time-limited in their nature.

Your request for information is refused under section 6(e)(vi) of the OIA, to avoid damage to the New Zealand economy by the premature disclosure of decisions relating to overseas trade agreements.

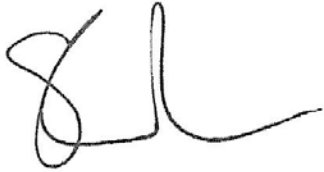
The full text of the New Zealand-Gulf Cooperation Council Free Trade Agreement will be published on the Ministry's website once the Agreement has been signed.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Therefore, our response to your request (with your personal information removed) may be published on the Ministry website:

www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/contact-us/official-information-act-responses/

If you have any questions about this decision, you can contact us by email at: DM-ESD@mfat.govt.nz. You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision by contacting www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a horizontal line that ends in a small upward curve.

Sarah Corbett
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade