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## **New Zealand directors bypassed by new immigration process**

The Screen Directors Guild of New Zealand (SDGNZ) is deeply concerned about the implications of the New Zealand Government's move to alter the immigration process for the entry of temporary entertainment industry workers into New Zealand. We feel that the new policy is not supportive and potentially damaging to the local screen and entertainment industries.

The immigration process has worked well over the past decades, where industry Guilds have monitored immigration requests to ensure that local jobs are considered for productions. Recently this has changed to a 'silent approval process', but now in most situations Guilds who work to protect local industry jobs are simply bypassed by the changes. They will rob industry organisations from engaging and networking with international and local production companies and as a result lead to less opportunities for New Zealand directors. This new policy has taken away our ability to regulate our own industries.

Crucially, those entering the country to work for fourteen days or less will now no longer required to go to a Guild for approval, rather they face a "simplified process". 80% of screen workers applying for working visas stay in New Zealand for less than 14 days. SDGNZ sees that the new process opens up opportunities for significant exploitation.

In an industry where most television commercials are shot within a 14 day timeframe, and productions of television episodes and one off dramas could also potentially fall within this timeframe, the new law changes effectively mean an open door policy.

Anna Cahill, SDGNZ Executive Director, states, "It is difficult for New Zealand directors to have sustainable careers. Their income is often built on a multitude of jobs. Having regular work and directing opportunities on commercials and other smaller projects is crucial to developing and maintaining skills that lead to bigger projects for directors."

In any industry due diligence is required to maintain its standards. In the screen industry creative personnel are key to the success of a production and therefore should be subject to proper scrutiny. Continued communication about projects is a more effective way to build industry relationships and to ensure balance on projects between international and national directors where New Zealand directors have been considered.



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In the past SDGNZ has worked closely with producers to encourage the use of talented New Zealand directors as a first option, and in the case of big international projects, alongside international directors. Such dialogue will effectively be lost when companies are given accreditation allowing them to bring in workers without further referral.

SDGNZ cares about the ecology and health of the New Zealand screen industry and those working in it. It is our concern that the new immigration policy will lead directly to the loss of jobs for performers, crew and directors. This will lead to a decline in our skills base and is clearly contrary to the Government's stated election policy of Kiwi's First.

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