

# Sex work/escort is on skilled employment list, Immigration NZ confirms

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Lisa Lewis, a sex worker, is concerned about the increasing number of illegal underage and foreign sex workers advertising their trade in New Zealand. / Video by Brett Phibbs

Would-be migrants can claim valuable points as skilled sex workers or escorts, according to information on Immigration NZ's (INZ) website.

But an immigration expert say it would be difficult for any applicant to succeed.

The agency confirmed sex work/escort is on the skilled employment list, despite it not being on the skill-shortage list.

A sex worker or escort is defined as someone as providing clients with sexual services or social companionship.

"The list itself comes from the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) list and not INZ," an agency spokeswoman said.

According to information on INZ's website, sex worker or escort is listed as an ANZSCO level 5 skilled employment, and applicants could claim points if they were paid at or above \$36.44 per hour, which is \$75,795 based on a 40-hour week.

The applicant would also have to be qualified in ways that include having a recognised qualification or have at least three years of relevant work experience.

The New Zealand Association of Migration and Investment (NZAMI) said, despite it being on the skilled employment list, it was difficult for would-be applicants to claim points.

"Even though prostitution is a lawful occupation, it is not an occupation that an immigrant can undertake on a temporary visa, sex work is specifically excepted," said NZAMI spokesman Peter Moses.

"An applicant would have to be onshore lawfully and not working, or off-shore while applying for residence. And they would need a formal offer of employment - also not the rule."

Moses said the profession was on the list and falls into policy because it is on the ANZSCO list.

"There would be many other issues that would make it unlikely to succeed," he said.

Association members had not come across anyone claiming points as a skilled sex worker.

Hamilton-based sex worker Lisa Lewis said it was "absurd" for the profession to be listed when it is illegal for temporary migrants to do sex work here.

New Zealand Prostitutes Collective co-founder Catherine Healy is aware that sex worker is on the skilled employment list, but did not know of anyone who had moved here as one.

The INZ spokeswoman said the agency doesn't grant residence or temporary entry visas to anyone who provided or intended to provide commercial sexual services.

She said this was in line with the Prostitution Reform Act 2003, which said no temporary visa or permission may be granted to anyone with intentions to provide, operate or invest in commercial sex.

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