



03 July 2020

Erin Zheng

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File No: DOIA 1920 – 1728

Dear Erin Zheng

Thank you for your email on 09 June 2020, requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA):

1. How many NON-priority SMC applications were allocated to a case officer during May 2020? How many priority SMC applications were allocated to a case officer during May 2020?
2. What is the lodgement time for the oldest SMC application in the backlog which is still waiting for allocation to a case officer?
3. According to INZ website, "Applications that don't meet either criterion for prioritisation are allocated to an immigration officer in the order they are received."(<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/media-centre/news-notifications/how-we-prioritise-resident-visa-applications/smc-and-rfw-timeframe-information>)
Could you kindly advise why some non-priority SMC or WTR applications were allocated to case officers earlier than all the others, even though they lodged later.
4. Do you have any plan to reduce current huge SMC backlog? Could you provide some details of allocation Non-priority applications? How often and in what volume are they happening?
5. Will the EOI gets reopened before the backlog cleared?
6. The current timeframe published on INZ website cannot provide the correct information for non-priority applicants. Will there be separate timeframes for both priority and non-priority applications?

Our response

The skilled residence applications processed in the Manukau office are made up of Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) and Residence from Work (RFW) applications. They are not split into two separate queues based on the application category. Once an application is accepted for processing it is then identified as to whether it meets the prioritisation criteria, or not, and triaged into either the priority or non-priority queue.

1. Limited processing residence applications resumed once New Zealand moved to Level 2 as limited staff were able to return to the office due to health and safety requirements. In May 2020, 120 skilled residence applications were allocated from the priority-queue. No applications were allocated from the non-priority queue in May 2020.

There have been 52 applications allocated from the non-priority queue in June 2020. This includes the applications that were allocated through the Employment Visa Escalations Inbox process.

2. The oldest unallocated application in the non-priority Skilled Resident queue is dated 17 December 2018.
3. An individual can make a request for urgent allocation of their employment based visa via the Employment Visa Escalation (EVE) process through the following link <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/media-centre/newsletters/korero/korero-july-2019/employment-visa-escalations-eve>. If the request meets the criteria, the application is allocated to an immigration officer for assessment regardless of whether the file is a priority or non-priority file and the date of lodgement.
4. The processing of residence applications is based on the New Zealand Residence Programme. Immigration Instructions at A16.1 (General Instructions) <http://inzkit/publish/opsmanual/#44854.htm> provide the framework for the allocation of applications. A16.1 also allows the manual allocation of other applications when individual circumstances warrant this. Immigration Instructions A16.1 sets out the order of visa processing for both residence- and temporary entry class visa applications. For those applicants who have submitted a skilled residence application SMC or RFW, priority is given to applicants in New Zealand where the:
 - Application includes a job offer with an hourly rate equivalent to or higher than twice the median wage (currently \$51.00 per hour or an annual salary of \$106,080 or more); or
 - Application includes a job offer which requires occupational registration where occupational registration is required by immigration instructions.

Second Priority will be given to other residence class visa applications.

5. No decision has been made on when the EOI process will reopen. The Immigration New Zealand website will be updated accordingly when a decision is made.
6. We are unable to calculate timeliness based on whether a file is priority or not. The timeframes reflected on the Immigration New Zealand (INZ) website are the processing times for category once it is allocated, regardless of originating queue.

You have the right to contest the decision to withhold information by seeking an investigation and review of that decision by the Ombudsman. Information about how to

make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request or this response, please contact Adam Jones, Business Advisor, Operations Support, Immigration New Zealand at adam.jones@mbie.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely

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Immigration New Zealand
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment