



28 OCT 2020

Arthur

fyi-request-13841-cd279790@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: DOIA 2021 - 0647

Dear Arthur

Thank you for your email of 18 September 2020, requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA):

*Good afternoon, I am writing this letter to enquire the SMC visa progress; I am a work visa holder working in New Zealand now, and I have applied for the resident visa, I am fully aware that currently, INZ is facing great pressure due to huge amount of applications. I do also appreciate all the work INZ has been doing on solving the backlog of SMC visa. However, I was wondering if I could have your assistance in about the data of SMC as follows.*

- 1. What is the oldest application still waiting for allocating a case officer?*
- 2. On average, how many applications are assigned to a case officer each week, from August?*
- 3. From the oldest application to 11 June 2019. How many applications are still waiting for allocating? Could you list the data by onshore and offshore respectively?*
- 4. How many priority applications and non-priority applications are processed every week?*

On 24 September 2020 you clarified question 4: *'I want to get the information about the decision made. I can find the decision made data from data explorer, but it can't be divided by priority applications and non-priority applications. If you could give me the information I would be so appreciated for your help'. 'Could you please assort the data from 1st June to today, 24th Sep?'*

#### **Our response**

##### Question 1

*What is the oldest application still waiting for allocating a case officer?*

As of 9 October 2020, the oldest Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) application to be allocated to an immigration officer, in which the principal applicant is currently in New Zealand, was lodged on 28 March 2019. The oldest SMC application to be allocated to an immigration officer, in which the principal applicant is currently outside of New Zealand, was lodged on 14 January 2019.

Please note that applications for applicants who are outside of New Zealand are currently on hold. This is because people who are not New Zealand citizens or residents are unlikely to travel to New Zealand while our border is closed. Immigration New Zealand (INZ) is not able to legally grant a visa to people who are unlikely to meet the entry requirements. As such, offshore

applications have been separated and are not currently being processed. Processing for offshore applications will resume when the border re-opens.

#### Question 2

*On average, how many applications are assigned to a case officer each week, from August?*

Please note that the skilled residence applications processed in the INZ Manukau office are made up of two categories: SMC and Residence from Work (RFW). 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. Therefore the below data includes both SMC and RFW applications.

On average, 190 skilled residence applications were allocated to immigration officers each week, from 3 August 2020 to 12 October 2020 (11 weeks).

The New Zealand Residence Programme (NZRP) Planning Range sets the upper and lower number for residence visa approvals. The previous Planning Range was 50,000 to 60,000 residence approvals from 1 July 2018 to 31 December 2019. The Government is currently reviewing its approach to the NZRP and is considering replacing the planning range with a more targeted approach that focuses on management of specific residence visa types. In the meantime, INZ will continue to process applications at same volume and with the same level of resourcing as the previous NZRP allowed for, this does have an impact on the number of applications that can be allocated and the timeliness of application processing.

Any updates in regards to the allocation of applications can be found at the following link: [www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/media-centre/news-notifications/how-we-prioritise-resident-visa-applications/smc-and-rfw-timeframe-information](http://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/media-centre/news-notifications/how-we-prioritise-resident-visa-applications/smc-and-rfw-timeframe-information)

#### Question 3

*From the oldest application to 11 June 2019. How many applications are still waiting for allocating? Could you list the data by onshore and offshore respectively?*

As of 9 October 2020, there are 978 applications in the onshore queue, lodged between 28 March 2019 (the oldest) and 11 June 2019, waiting to be allocated to an immigration officer. There are 405 applications in the offshore queue, lodged between 14 January 2019 (the oldest) and 11 June 2019, waiting to be allocated to an immigration officer.

#### Question 4

*How many priority applications and non-priority applications are processed every week?*

Between 1 June 2020 and 24 September 2020 (inclusive), 2,178 SMC applications have been decided.

To determine how many of these are priority applications and how many are non-priority applications would require manual research of 2,178 applications.

We have refused this part of your request under section 18(f) of the OIA. The information requested is held on a large number of individual files. To provide you with the information would require staff to manually review and analyse each application. It would remove Ministry staff from their core duties and therefore the greater public interest in the effective and efficient

administration of the public service would not be served. I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in both cases, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or free phone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request or this response, please contact Dongrui Pang, Operations Support, Immigration New Zealand at [Dongrui.Pang@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:Dongrui.Pang@mbie.govt.nz)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephanie Greathead', written in a cursive style.

Stephanie Greathead  
Acting General Manager – Border and Visa Operations  
Immigration New Zealand  
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

