



16 OCT 2020

Claire Morris

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File No: DOIA 2021 – 0648

Dear Claire Morris

Thank you for your email on 19 September 2020, requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA):

*- How many SMC applications are currently in the non-priority queue waiting for a case officer, between the date that you complete this request and the 11th May 2019 - How many of these are on shore applications - How many applications roughly are being allocated a case officer each week.*

#### **Our response**

Over the last couple of years, demand for the Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) and Residence from Work sub-stream (RfW) has risen significantly. This has resulted in longer decision times for applicants.

As you are aware, priority is given to applicants who have submitted a skilled residence application (SMC or RfW), in New Zealand and 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.

The remaining applications are processed in the order they are received.

All Immigration New Zealand (INZ) offices were closed during Alert Level 4 at the end of March 2020 and as a result, the processing of SMC and RfW residence applications was on hold during that time. INZ's onshore offices began opening under Alert Level 3 and 2, however INZ was required to adhere to strict guidelines. While the processing of SMC and RfW residence applications resumed during Alert Level 2, the number of staff returning to offices was very limited, in line with health and safety requirements, which had an impact on the number of residence applications being work on. With Auckland recently returning to Alert Level 3 for nearly 3 weeks in August 2020, this also had a further impact on the ability to continue normal levels of processing for the skilled residence applications.

The INZ website remains the best place for up to date information on processing times.

*- How many SMC applications are currently in the non-priority queue waiting for a case officer, between the date that you complete this request and the 11th May 2019.*

As at 26 September 2020, there were 13,574 non-priority SMC applications lodged between 11 May 2019 to 26 September 2020.

*- How many of these are on shore applications*

As at 26 September 2020, there were 12,311 onshore non-priority SMC applications lodged between 11 May 2019 to 26 September 2020.

*- How many applications roughly are being allocated a case officer each week?*

As you have not stated a time period we are unable to provide you an average number of skilled residence applications allocation to Immigration Officers each week.

However, on 05 October 2020, 152 non-priority applications and 58 priority applications were allocated to immigration officers. On 12 October 2020, 58 non-priority applications and 82 priority applications were allocated to immigration officers. As at 12 October 2020, the oldest application in the non-priority queue was lodged on 25 March 2019.

Please note that there is no guarantee that future skilled residence allocations will be the allocated at this rate.

Applications in the priority queue are now being allocated within two weeks of an application being put in the priority queue. While it is expected that INZ will continue to receive priority applications, the low volume of priority applications means INZ is now able to make steady and regular process through the non-priority queue.

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

Yours sincerely



Nicola Hogg  
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