



22 February 2021

Seenivasan Ramasubbu
fyi-request-14520-cb7090d5@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: DOIA 2021-1344

Dear Seenivasan Ramasubbu,

Thank you for your email of 24 January 2021 requesting under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA), the following information:

- “1) The number of offshore SMC applications (month-wise breakup) currently is on the system for processing?*
- 2) When will be the offshore SMC application will be start processing? or*
- 3) If it depends on border opening, then Is there an option to process the application based on the ANZSCO code linked with Major government programs? For instance, 133111 CONSTRUCTION PROJECT MANAGER can be processed for current urgent Major Government Construction programs?*
- 3) Is priority & non-priority status applicable to offshore SMC application?”*

Our Response

Question 1: “The number of offshore SMC applications (month-wise breakup) currently is on the system for processing?”

Processing of applications where individuals are outside New Zealand has largely been put on hold. Under section 43(1)(b) of the Immigration Act 2009, Immigration New Zealand (INZ) is unable to grant a visa to any individual who is unlikely to meet entry requirements to New Zealand. With the current border restrictions in place, almost all applications for entry permission must be refused.

Table One below provides the number of Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) applications on hand as at 2 February 2021 in the offshore non priority queue that have not yet been allocated, broken down by the month the application was accepted. These applications will remain on hold.

Table One:

Accepted Month	Number of Applications
Jan-19	30
Feb-19	113
Mar-19	65
Apr-19	70
May-19	83
Jun-19	78
Jul-19	125
Aug-19	97



Sep-19	88
Oct-19	86
Nov-19	95
Dec-19	87
Jan-20	91
Feb-20	109
Mar-20	64
May-20	17
Jun-20	124
Jul-20	63
Aug-20	15
Sep-20	37
Oct-20	13
Nov-20	29
Dec-20	16
Jan-21	13
Total	1,608

Question 2 & 3: “2) When will be the offshore SMC application will be start processing? or 3) If it depends on border opening, then Is there an option to process the application based on the ANZSCO code linked with Major government programs? For instance, 133111 CONSTRUCTION PROJECT MANAGER can be processed for current urgent Major Government Construction programs?”

As of 16 September 2020, INZ has been processing and deciding offshore applications for some relationship-based visas, if they are supported by a New Zealand citizen or resident. The processing of all other offshore applications remains on hold. This is because while New Zealand’s border is closed, INZ cannot legally grant a visa to an applicant who is currently offshore, unless they are either exempt from the border restrictions or have been granted a border exception.

No decisions have been made on when the border restrictions will be lifted or when processing of all other offshore applications will commence. The Government, in the meantime, continues to review the way our borders are managed.

The best place to find updated information is the INZ website which is being updated regularly as decisions are being made: www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/covid-19.

Question 3: “Is priority & non-priority status applicable to offshore SMC application?”

INZ does not have a specific SMC queue but one for skilled residence applications. These applications are SMC and Resident from Work (RFW), and are not split into two separate queues based on the application category.

The SMC and RFW category applications will be prioritised for allocation to an immigration officer if the principal applicant is in New Zealand and:

- is paid twice the median wage or higher (currently NZD \$51 an hour or NZD \$106,080 a year), or
- works in an occupation where registration is required by immigration instructions and holds that registration.

Applications that don’t meet either criterion for prioritisation are allocated to an immigration officer in the order they are received if the principle applicant is in New Zealand. If the principal applicant is outside of New Zealand their application will remain in the offshore non priority queue.

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

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request or this response, please contact Lautalie Leusa Vaa, Senior Business Advisor, Operations Support, Immigration New Zealand at Lautalie.Leusavaa@mbie.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely,



Jock Gilray
Acting General Manager - Border and Visa Operations
Immigration New Zealand