



24 March 2021

Ref: DOIA 2021-1657

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 02 March 2021 requesting under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA), the following information:

"I would like to request a data on a monthly basis the no. of onshore resident visa applications lodged up to 27.11.2019 that are yet to be allocated to case officers.

I also would like to request a data on the no. of applications that were allocated weekly to case officers from August 2020 to the date you respond to this request showing the lodgement date of each application, categorised as to priority and non-priority queue."

Our Response

Question One: "I would like to request a data on a monthly basis the no. of onshore resident visa applications lodged up to 27.11.2019 that are yet to be allocated to case officers."

We have interpreted your request to relating to Skilled Residence applications. Immigration New Zealand (INZ) has one queue for skilled residence applications. The applications in this queue include Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) and Resident from Work (RFW), and are not split into two separate queues based on the application category.

The SMC and RFW 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 do not meet the criterion for prioritisation are allocated to an immigration officer in the order they are received. Applications however, can be prioritised or deprioritised if an applicant's circumstances change.

As of 08 March 2021, INZ is allocating:

- Non-prioritised SMC and RFW applications accepted in August 2019, and
- Prioritised SMC and RFW applications within two weeks of the application joining the priority queue.

Table One below provides the number of unallocated SMC and RFW applications in the onshore non-priority and priority queue as at 8 March 2021, that were accepted up to 27 November 2019 (inclusive) and broken down by month the applications were accepted for processing.

Please note as applicants' circumstances change, some non-priority applications may meet the prioritisation criteria (current occupational registration where registration is required by immigration

instructions or an hourly rate at or above twice the median wage). Such applications will be moved to the priority queue and allocated within two weeks.

Table One

Month Accepted	Onshore Non Priority Queue	Priority Queue	Total
Aug-19	448	0	448
Sep-19	602	0	602
Oct-19	650	1	651
Nov-19	728	4	732

Question Two: "I also would like to request a data on the no. of applications that were allocated weekly to case officers from August 2020 to the date you respond to this request showing the lodgement date of each application, categorised as to priority and non-priority queue."

Allocations of applications to immigration officers occur weekly and the number of applications that are allocated is dependent upon processing capacity. The Government is currently reviewing its approach to the New Zealand Residence Programme (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 the same volume and with the same level of resourcing as the previous NZRP allowed for. This has an impact on the number of applications that can be allocated and the timeliness of application processing.

Table two below provides the number of skilled residence applications that were allocated from the onshore non priority and priority queue, between the periods 03 August 2020 to 22 March 2021. Allocation dates are not held in the Immigration Application Management System (AMS) in a reportable format therefore, these figures were recorded manually by the INZ Manukau office, and limited to only the number of applications allocated each week from each queue. A further breakdown by lodgement dates of each application is therefore information that cannot be obtained without substantial collation.

To provide you this level of information would require a staff member to manually check individual applications on hand in AMS to identify the applications within scope, and obtain the individual lodgement dates. As such, we have refused this part of your request under s18(f) of the OIA, because this information cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

This task would remove Ministry staff from their core duties and therefore the greater public interest 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 but I have concluded, in both cases, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

Table Two

Allocation week	Priority Queue	Non Priority Queue
3-Aug-20	154	48
10-Aug-20	168	37
17-Aug-20	165	4
24-Aug-20	116	149
31-Aug-20	19	115
7-Sep-20	45	177
14-Sep-20	77	97
21-Sep-20	63	123

28-Sep-20	49	110
5-Oct-20	58	152
12-Oct-20	82	58
19-Oct-20	44	147
26-Oct-20	8	169
2-Nov-20	16	175
9-Nov-20	67	172
16-Nov-20	68	184
23-Nov-20	40	205
30-Nov-20	70	156
7-Dec-20	52	143
14-Dec-20	57	171
21-Dec-20	50	79
28-Dec-20	0	122
4-Jan-21	47	104
11-Jan-21	16	97
18-Jan-21	49	114
25-Jan-21	58	92
1-Feb-21	41	129
8-Feb-21	17	177
15-Feb-21	60	17
22-Feb-21	21	49
1-Mar-21	35	30
8-Mar-21	52	0
15-Mar-21	73	49
22-Mar-21	16	118

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

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of the decision to refuse parts of your request. 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 Lautalie Leausa Vaa, Senior Business Advisor, Operations Support, Immigration New Zealand at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,



Nicola Hogg
 General Manager - Border and Visa Operations
 Immigration New Zealand