



IMMIGRATION REFERENCE GROUP (IRG) MEETING ON 06 OCTOBER 2021

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

Compliance

- Since 1 January 2020, 391 people have been deported from NZ. Of those, 57 people have been deported to the Pacific.
- Of the 57 people deported to the Pacific, 40 had committed criminal offences (25 of which had been imprisoned for their offences), and 24 occurred before 1 April 2020 when Immigration New Zealand (INZ) was deporting people under normal circumstances.
- The individuals deported who had not committed criminal offences came to our attention in other ways, such as for immigration-related offences (e.g. providing fraudulent, false, or misleading information).
- Information about COVID testing and vaccinations is not passed on to INZ.
- The number of people deported since the beginning of this year is 22. Of those, 18 individuals had committed criminal offences. This reflects the fact that INZ's current primary focus is on criminal deportations.

Afghanistan

- There have been 531 arrivals, with 353 in temporary accommodation and 85 currently in MIQ (also receiving medical assistance)¹. Arrivals include Critical Purpose Visa holders (the majority), and NZ citizens and residents.
- A permanent residence category has been established for this group. Applicants must be in New Zealand when they apply and lodge their application on or before 12 December 2022.
- INZ is currently working with the Ministry of Social Development for those on Critical Purpose Visas to access support. The Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education have provided exemptions to provide health and education services for this group.
- INZ is working with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) on assisting people to come to NZ, and MFAT is working to get people out of Pakistan, Qatar, etc. Current border settings allow visa holders who were in Afghanistan on 15 August 2021 to travel to New Zealand despite border restrictions (if they held a visa on 19 August 2021 and continue to hold one – see Y3.30(xii) of the Operational Manual).

¹ As at 02 November 2021

Border and Visa Operations (BVO)

General

- Productivity is impacted by lockdowns. MBIE offices have limits on the number of people able to work in an office and this means those in our offices are focussed on processing paper-based applications.
- BVO continues to recruit for a range of roles and this has continued during lockdown.
- Some applicants have submitted an online application while their paper application wasn't able to be processed. This has created duplicate applications that BVO continues to work through.
- The volume of work visas continues to be strong - this includes Essential Skills, Variation of Conditions and Work to Residence.
- A small number of staff in the Manukau office are processing paper applications, which includes some skilled residence applications.
- The Palmerston North office will process visitor visas through the enhanced Immigration Online system when this is implemented later this year.
- Refunds work is underway. There have been 15,009 refunds processed at a total of \$4,463,938².

Border exceptions

- Border exceptions are not impacted by the Auckland lockdown as they are received and processed in an online environment. Large groups are impacting the system, such as fishing groups and humanitarian Expressions of Interest from Afghans.
- Over 83,000 border exceptions have been received and completed since border restrictions came into force.
- Regarding other critical worker requests, 62% of requests are approved resulting in Invitations to Apply being issued.
- Critical Purpose Visas are being issued allowing nine months to enter NZ.

National Documentation Office (NaDO)

- As at 6 October, NaDO was closed because of the Alert Level 4 lockdown in Auckland. When it was safe to do so, some staff went into the office to forward on-hand mail and redirect mail. At that time the office caught up with opening mail, and mail was being forwarded to other offices as a short-term risk treatment.
- Adhering to floor limits and health and safety have been the key focus areas for INZ.
- INZ received a high volume of residual paper applications during the lockdown. If there is an online application option, INZ encourages people to use that avenue.
- Visa Pak 483 notes that if you need a PPI extension, this must be requested. There will not be an automatic extension to timeframes for everyone as different parts of the country are in

² As at 26 October 2021

different alert levels. Immigration officers will take a pragmatic approach to requests from applicants/advisers affected by alert levels.

MBIE policy

- Afghanistan work, border policy, Recognised Seasonal Employer quarantine-free travel, and the 2021 Resident Visa have all been large components of the Policy work program.
- Immigration instructions, including the fees, for the new 2021 Resident Visa have been certified by the Minister of Immigration and are now publically available. The instructions have been disseminated via an amendment circular and the website has been updated with detailed information about the visa requirements and application process.
- The timeframe for the 2021 Resident Visa is very tight. If timeframes allowed, consideration would have been given to consultation with stakeholders, however this was not possible in this instance. MBIE would like to thank members of the IRG for the questions and scenarios they sent through - these have been considered when drafting the instructions. There will be calibration processes in place and early life support for the visa.

ACTIONS

	Action	Response/Update
1	Consider running a webinar on border exceptions	<p>INZ to organise a border exception webinar toward the end of the year (Dec).</p> <p><i>Webinars scheduled:</i> <i>Oct/Nov - 2021 Res Visa (two webinars).</i> <i>Oct - Enhanced Imm Online platform.</i> <i>Nov - Accredited Employer Work Visa job check requirements</i></p>
2	Clarify with NaDO: What are acceptable signatures for paper applications going forward?	INZ are accepting electronic signatures for all temporary visa applications.
3	Look into how many onshore applicants are requesting extensions to PPIs/requests for information (due to COVID disruptions)	IRG to collect an approx. sample to estimate the size of the problem and communicate this back to INZ

IMMIGRATION REFERENCE GROUP (IRG) MEETING ON 22 MARCH 2022

Note: In order to provide discussion points that are accurate and up to date, some information has been updated to reflect changes and developments since the IRG meeting occurred.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

Privacy Work Programme

- The privacy work programme is a cross-INZ work programme that has been set up to look at the system and address specific issues around privacy requests. The programme will run for six months but there will be a long-running commitment to continuous improvement.
- As part of the programme, INZ is looking into the future to assess what the right shape is for INZ's privacy capabilities so that good practice can be embedded and requests can be managed in the most appropriate way.
- INZ is engaging with stakeholders to hear their insights and perspectives. The privacy request working group has been set up, which has some members from the IRG and some additional stakeholders with an interest in this topic.
- The first working group meeting was held on the 2nd of March to have an initial discussion about the privacy request process and agree on next steps. Following this, a feedback and insights session was held on the 11th of April to hear more in-depth stakeholder feedback. The next meeting is scheduled for the 12th of May.

Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV)

- Email communications were sent to stakeholders on the 7th of April to provide updates about changes to the AEWV policy criteria and timing, as well as fees:
 - To align with the Immigration Rebalance, the Government has announced that jobs will now need to pay at least the median wage.
 - The requirements for standard and high-volume accreditation are now aligned. INZ estimates that approximately 1,000 employers will apply for high-volume accreditation.
 - There will be more flexibility around how INZ calculates pay rates to take into account uneven working hours.
 - Employers in both regions and cities will now need to advertise unless the role is paid twice the median wage or more. The introduction of the median wage threshold means

that employers will not generally be required to obtain an MSD skills match report for roles.

- The impact of the pandemic on resourcing has meant that adjustments to implementation dates are necessary. The migrant check still opens on the 4th of July, but employers can apply for accreditation from the 23rd of May and for a job check from the 20th of June.
- Email communications were sent to stakeholders on the 4th of May about the job check and the AEWV application. Detailed information about the job check and the work visa application is now available on the Immigration New Zealand website. A webinar for immigration professionals about the detailed requirements for the job check and the work visa application will be held on the 18th of May.
- The AEWV checks are a priority in terms of INZ's resourcing. Over 190 staff (not all immigration officers) were hired last year, and INZ is taking all steps necessary to put people on the ground and ensure technology is working as it should.

MBIE Immigration Policy

- Policy work is being undertaken around the AEWV and the Immigration Rebalance, with the aim of improving the skills mix of migrant workers and making the pathway to residency easier and more certain for migrants with skills that New Zealand particularly needs.
- The review of the Skilled Migrant Category for residence, which is also part of the Immigration Rebalance work, involves looking at the 'twice the median wage' pathway and whether it's fit for purpose, among other settings. MBIE's goal is for there to be a simpler system for INZ to administer.
- Work is being undertaken on a review of the immigration funding model, which was initially started because of the revenue gap created by Covid-19.
- Key considerations around reopening the parent category are how much the category should be altered and how to fairly reopen it. No estimated timing can be provided at this stage due to the need to complete other priority policy work set by the Government.
- The investment attraction strategy is being looked at in terms of how our investor visa settings support the strategy. The Government is looking for more active investment and looking at how this can be combined with investors' skillsets. Cabinet will be considering proposals to enhance active investment in early May.
- Business residence applications that were received during the border closure can now be decided.
- Other key pieces of policy work being undertaken are:

- Updating the living cost requirements for students
- Reviewing post-study work rights
- Work on free trade agreements and temporary visa commitments
- Future key pieces of work will be:
 - A partnership review is likely to occur next year, including the living together requirements and culturally arranged marriages
 - A review of the Pacific residence categories
 - A review of the Immigration Act
- A third Immigration Policy team is currently being established for international and humanitarian work.

Border and Visa Operations (BVO)

Processing

Note: Updated visa processing data will be sent out shortly after the data has been reviewed.

- BVO is highlighting to processing officers that they need to take a holistic view and consider the pathway for migrants when granting or declining visas.
- The Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme continues to be a challenge operationally in terms of volumes and changes in settings. INZ is engaging with employers to manage expectations.
- 30% of IOs are new or in the three-month period of competency training, not including people moving to categories that have not been processed in a while, which requires a significant amount of planning for INZ.

Business Migration Branch

- There are currently 19 business immigration specialists (BIS) working in the Business Migration Branch, with one staff member on maternity leave.
- Additionally, there are two vacancies for BIS that INZ is in the process of recruiting for.
- The Business Migration Branch has been split back into two teams under two immigration managers.
- INZ's current focus is to reduce the queues that have grown since the borders have been closed. INZ is actively managing allocation communications so that, when enquiring, advisers can receive an approximate timeframe for allocation. This is working well and positive feedback on this change has been received.

Border

- Over 100,000 border exceptions have been received in the last two years. There have been 15,000 workers approved under the Other Critical Worker category and 7,000 critical health workers approved.
- The new Other Critical Worker criteria that started on the 14th of March represents the start of the border reopening to workers. There has been an increase in Other Critical Worker requests, but those submitted under the 1.5 times the median wage criteria are relatively light touch in terms of processing.
- The criteria for partners of skilled workers has been changed to 1.5 times the median wage which aligns with the long term Other Critical Worker criteria and makes it easier to bring partners and dependent children in from overseas.
- The 2022 Special Ukraine Visa allows NZ citizens and residents to bring their immediate family from Ukraine to NZ. This is a two-step process that can be completed by people already in New Zealand. There are no forms required and the process is largely declaration-based. As at 18 April, INZ had received 748 expressions of interest (EOIs), received visa applications from 637 people, and issued visas to 380 people.
- Reconnecting the border means a significant amount of training for INZ staff must be completed. INZ is currently working on this, and we are planning well in advance.

Compliance:

- There are 27 compliance officers currently in Auckland, however work needs to be carefully prioritised as a number of staff are currently on secondments to other parts of MBIE and because of Covid-19.
- The continuous impact of Covid-19 and border closures has created a number of challenges in this space and there are still a number of practical impediments to compliance work. Wherever possible, deportation liability notices and deportation orders are still being served.
- There are still issues with the availability and frequency of flights leaving New Zealand and transit options remain limited, impacting on INZ's ability to undertake deportations. Police are not currently able to provide escorts for some cases where the airline requires them.
- INZ continues to work closely with MFAT to facilitate the return of prison release cases who are subject to deportation to Pacific countries. This continues to be a priority and is resource-intensive work.
- The compliance team has not been able to physically enter prisons for several months now due to Corrections regulations to manage Covid-19 within the prison system. As is the case with

lawyers, the compliance team has to engage with clients remotely or seek assistance from Corrections to serve documentation on clients.

- Electronic bracelets are not being used to manage migrants who have been released into the community, but some migrants are subject to post-release conditions under Corrections and Parole legislation, such as non-association orders, curfews, location orders, or submitting for testing. INZ can place migrants on immigration reporting conditions within the community in support of their release conditions under the Parole Act.

Deportation Data (July 2021 – April 2022)

Outcome month	Type of deportation		Totals
	Deportation	Self-deportation	
July 2021	21	18	39
August 2021	16	14	30
September 2021	6	9	15
October 2021	7	5	12
November 2021	3	5	8
December 2021	6	8	14
January 2022	11	19	30
February 2022	9	11	20
March 2022	1	9	10
April 2022	6	9	15
Totals	86	108	194

Migrant welfare and sector wellbeing:

- The Regional Migrant Skills Retention team is a team of relationship managers around NZ that engage with migrant communities (i.e., through intermediary organisations, such as ethnic community groups and city councils) to inform and educate them on how to use the immigration system. Relationship manager networks in each region disseminate information and link migrant service providers with relevant immigration information.
- Examples of the type of work the team does include the following:
 - Meetings have been set up with the Ukrainian community and INZ has worked to explain the immigration instructions in plain English. INZ content has been translated into Ukrainian and Russian and published on INZ's website.
 - During Covid lockdowns, community leaders contacted the team about temporary migrants facing financial hardships, so the team linked those migrants up with organisations giving out food parcels. Migrants were also referred to counselling services and Work Connect.
- Family violence discussions are ongoing, and the team is working to identify options to better provide information to stakeholders.

Please see the next page for a table of meeting actions.

RELEASED UNDER THE OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT

ACTIONS

	Action	Response/Update
1	Matt H to follow up with Alison McDonald about a potential Reconnecting NZ Focus Group and the IRG's involvement	Kristy Verster and Matt Gibbons are attendees of the focus group to represent the IRG.
2	IRG to provide Andrew Craig with information about what they are particularly interested in giving feedback about	-
3	Deborah to make contact with Christine Hyndman who will be reviewing the Immigration Act	-
4	Mikayla to check if RMS can give a regular update about their work at IRG meetings	Yes - RMS will be attending the next IRG meeting.
5	Jock to check which step partners of work visa holders can return to NZ from	Currently, partners of work visa holders can return to NZ from October.
6	Bernard to send through a short update about BAU in the compliance space once a month that can be passed on to the IRG	The first compliance update is incorporated into this document. Further updates will be sent to the IRG on a monthly basis.
7	Matt H to set up a meeting with INZ Comms and Information & Education to discuss tone and style of communications to migrant communities	Meeting in the process of being set up for May – date and time TBC.



**NEW ZEALAND
IMMIGRATION**

IMMIGRATION REFERENCE GROUP (IRG) MEETING ON 14 JUNE 2022

Note: In order to provide discussion points that are accurate and up to date, some information has been updated to reflect changes and developments since the IRG meeting occurred.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV)

INZ speakers: Director of Immigration Policy Integration, Nick Aldous, and National Manager of Visa Operations, Sarah Clifford

- Employers have been able to apply for accreditation since 23 May. 3,500 employer accreditation applications have been submitted, with 2,200 being approved. The number of applications coming through is being watched closely and will help to determine Immigration New Zealand's (INZ) workforce needs.
- INZ's goal is to have accreditation applications processed within 10 working days. Currently they are being processed at an average of eight calendar days each. Complicated cases where more information is required take longer. Process will increase in efficiency the more it is refined.
- The Job check stage launched on 20 June and is more complicated than the accreditation process. Work visa applications go live on 4 July. INZ is ready for communications and engagement and the focus is on the job and migrant checks.
- Over 100 staff in both Christchurch sites and Manukau are trained on AEWV. Daily activities depend on the volume coming through.
- Applications which are triaged as low touch and require minimal handling from INZ are streamlined to ensure they do not sit in queues and are turned around promptly. INZ's approach to deliverables is to have more people ready to go and pivot them as needed.
- Staff are excited about using ADEPT and processing new policies. Feedback has been positive.

MBIE Immigration Policy

INZ speakers: Principal Policy Advisor, Melanee Beatson, and Manager of Immigration (Skills and Residence) Policy, Andrew Craig

Discussion of Skilled Migrant Category (SMC)

- Introduction of Melanee Beatson who is running the Skilled Migrant programme review.
- The Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) has been closed to new Expressions of Interest (EOI) since March 2020.
- Pathways to residence through Resident Visa 2021 (RV21), green list, and AEWV holders earning double the median wage category have helped to shorten the SMC queue.
- Discussions are ongoing around reopening the SMC, and the extent to which the category should be altered, and how to fairly reopen it. There are discussions with Hon Faafoi as to what he would like the category to be, and the migrant groups he wants to target. Looking at both end state and short-term functionality. Trying to get a policy which gives ministers what they want and also gives certainty to migrants.
- Feedback from the IRG:
 - SMC processing times were too long and INZ should focus on operationalising and processing, so we don't go back to delays.
 - A number cap should be considered.
 - INZ should work out what did and didn't work for the RV21 process and use it to improve SMC when it re-opens.
 - ANZSCO and points system didn't work.
 - The term 'skilled migrant' suggests professionals rather than the skills New Zealand actually needs. INZ should target skilled people with transferable skills that the country could use, even if they don't have a job offer.
 - Discussion about branding e.g. SMC versus the skills we actually need. INZ needs to consider a name for the category that is good from a New Zealand marketing perspective.
 - Further time is needed to discuss SMC. A two-or three-day deep dive discussion could be beneficial.
 - In the Australian model of SMC applicants spend more time queueing up for the EOI being selected, and once it is selected the process is reasonably smooth. Contrasted with New Zealand's approach, whereby people paid thousands of dollars upfront to queue up for two or three years. Being strict at the EOI stage could help to measure the numbers that INZ want.
- Further feedback from the IRG on SMC restriction prohibiting migrants over the age of 55 from being granted residence through the SMC:
 - Consideration of whether the age limit should be increased from 55 to 60 to reflect the ageing working population and advances in health care leading to people working for longer.

- Suggestion of a split age decision, whereby people in specific occupations have higher age limits.
- Migrants seek clarity and certainty that they can remain in New Zealand. They wish to be able to buy property and know their children will be able to remain in this country.

Request for Engagement to liaise with Melanee and IRG to set up further discussions to test ideas and the IRGs understanding of what is and isn't working. Will consider after MBIE Policy have consulted the new Minister of Immigration.

- Reviewed what did and didn't work for SMC and has looked into the factors resulting in increased processing time, such as assessing ANSCO, work experience, and using the points system.

- INZ is interested in offering a forward path and certainty. Consideration of the type of certainty that could be offered and the feasibility of resident visas with conditions-imposed vs temporary visas:
 - EOI vs on hand applications is something that can be looked at. Targeted numbers of people coming through the category are a political decision. Looking at offering certainty to migrants, and what they can do for family members.

- End goal is to do what benefits New Zealand. INZ wants to find a balance between people with work experience and skills, and younger people committed to living their lives here. Discussions will be had with the Minister in order to fill medium term labour storages. May undergo public consultation.

- Needs to be a balance between needs of NZ and needs of migrants. We are in a competitive labour market.

- Discussion of Productivity Commission inquiry, Treaty obligations and overall population policy.
 - Looking at both temporary migrant and overall residence pool numbers and whether they fit in with New Zealand's needs.
 - Treaty discussions underway.
 - Immigration can't be the sole lever pulled for everything else, it's a support mechanism.

Border and Visa Operations (BVO)

INZ speakers: National Manager Visa Operations, Sarah Clifford and Jock Gilray

General BVO update

- INZ has been actively recruiting more staff, reprioritising existing resources, working to streamline its processes, and growing a second Christchurch office (same building, different floor

as existing operation) which will have up to the 180 staff (140 IOs) established by December this year.

- Since July last 2021, INZ has recruited more than 220 immigration officers, which when factoring in attrition has led to a growth of 110. INZ's current planning will see the number of IOs increase by this much again (growth of 200+) by June 2023. These numbers don't include enabling roles such as people leaders, technical advisors etc.
- INZ has comprehensive workforce planning in place, and it is regularly monitored and adjusted based on a variety of factors. The planning used to determine how resources are allocated across different visa products is based on agreed INZ business prioritisation decisions.
- Limited resourcing with top three priorities RV21, AEWV and RCNZ receiving the most focus.

Reconnecting New Zealand (RCNZ)

- RCNZ is a top priority for INZ and the Government. It's difficult to predict the number of applications we'll receive – the global migration landscape is not the same as it was pre-COVID – but we know our success is of huge importance to the country. The RCNZ team, led by Simon Sanders has been set up to ensure all INZ staff are best placed to deliver on this reopening.
- Some of the initial steps INZ have taken are:
 - **Hiring and training new processing staff:** INZ has hired and trained just over 220 new processing staff in the last 12 months and trained them across a number of visa categories. This broad training base allows us to move people according to greatest need.
 - **New technology:** The ADEPT system and enhanced Immigration Online is a game changer for INZ. Our people can process different activities in an application at the same time, and they can do it from anywhere. The system can also automate routine processes, allowing our people to apply their skills to high-value activities.
 - **New ways of working:** A series of people-centred initiatives to build change capability and collaboration across INZ.
 - **Prioritisation:** ensuring we are focused on the right priorities without losing focus of all the work we need to do as an organisation. Agreed business priorities determine how we allocate our resource across the different visa products.
 - **Clearing the decks:** clearing out any older applications, with a focus on partnership and Work Visa applications which are on-hand, so these are cleared as quickly as possible before products reopen in the coming weeks.
- INZ has also overseen the successful reopening to visitor visas applications from customers in the Pacific Forum from 16 May. Noting the various challenges of reopening in a market that has historically been paper based and availability of processing staff in those markets due to covid impacts – which is why INZ reopened for online visa submission.
- INZ continues to work towards the reopening of the border, with plans being developed for the successful delivery of visitor applications and student applications from 31 July.

- With the closure of offshore INZ processing offices, offshore Risk & Verification has focused heavily over the past year on ensuring it is prepared to support INZ (in particular the visa processing teams). All of the offshore risk and verification offices have now reopened. The teams in New Delhi and Bangkok are intended to grow in the near future.
- INZ has the capacity and capability to deliver, however this is an unprecedented set of circumstances for INZ and there are a lot of moving parts and different scenarios that we need to incorporate into our planning.

Operational leadership

- Recent leadership changes within BVO national manager roles. The role titles have been genericised from product specific to visa operations. This has resulted in the realignment of reporting lines for some sites.
- INZ has also had two new national managers join in the last couple of months (one external and one from MIQ) and so they are still in their learning phase. Glenda Parata (permanent) and Simon Russell (secondment, covering Steph Greathead secondment/parental leave).

Business Migration Branch

- The business team has been hit by staff movement. Five additional staff started on the 20th of June, with an additional three staff who have moved into the transfer of funds and removal of conditions team.
- Resources has been focused into the Post – Approved in principle (AIP) area so that both Section 49 and Transfer of Funds Investment queues are assessed more quickly.
- Assessment timeframes
 - Pre-Approval in Principle
 - Investor 1: allocation in 7 months
 - Investor 2: allocation in 20 months
 - Parent & Temporary Retirement: allocation in 23 months
 - Transfer of Investment Funds across all – around 2 months
 - S49 removal of conditions and 2-year checks across all – around 4 months
- Feedback from the IRG is that allocation times at BMB are way too long.

2021 Resident Visa

- 100,000 applications received for 200,000 people of which 25% have now been approved (25,000) for 54,500 New Zealanders.
- During policy development it was estimated that around 110,000 principal visa holders will be eligible to apply for RV21. Of these 28,000 were expected to be eligible under Phase 1 and 82,000 were expected to be eligible under Phase 2.
 - Approximately 93 per cent (26,012) of applications expected under Phase 1 had been received.

- Approximately 90 per cent (73,904) of applications expected under Phase 2 had been received.
- Approximately 91 per cent (99,916) of the applications expected under all Phases had been received.
- Continue to plan towards delivering 80% within the December 2022 timeframe.

Border

- Nearly 115,000 border exceptions have been processed to date – slightly under 1,000 per week.
- 56,000 Invitations to apply (ITA) have been issued.
- 48,000 Critical Purpose Visitor Visas have been issued.
- On the critical worker side 18,000 workers have been issued invitations to apply (ITA).

Top approval rates

- 94% oil and gas
- 92% film and television
- 90% research and development
- Lowest approval rates
- 26% retail
- 37% tourism and hospitality
- 39% services
- 3,700 workers have been issued Invitations to Apply as Classes of Workers

Top three

- Around 1500 of those have been fishing crew
- 330 meat workers
- 290 forestry workers
- 8,300 critical health workers have been issued ITAs.

Other critical workers

- At the moment INZ is seeing about 200 Other Critical Worker EOIs per week. Before the bright line change earlier in the year the number was about 60 per week.

General EOIs

- Averaging around 700 EOIs per week. From 13 April the 5,000-student cohort opened, INZ has issued around 4,800 ITA to date.
- The front end of the border exception process will close on 31 July (apart from a few class exceptions in the primary industries area). At that point all normal visa categories will be open.

Ukraine special visa update

Special policy implemented 15 March 2021.

HS.20 Sponsorship Requirements

- a. Applicants for a 2022 Special Ukraine Visa must be sponsored by an acceptable New Zealand sponsor.
- b. An acceptable New Zealand Sponsor is a person who:
 - i. meets the acceptable sponsor requirements outlined in [E6.5](#); and
 - ii. was born in Ukraine, or is a citizen, or was a citizen, or is a permanent resident of the Ukraine; and
 - iii. is ordinarily resident in New Zealand.
- c. A New Zealand sponsor must agree to the sponsorship undertakings in [E6.15](#).

HS.20.5 Family relationship requirements (extended family)

- a. The Nominated Family Member must be the New Zealand sponsor's:
 - i. parent; or
 - ii. grandparent; or
 - iii. sibling; or
 - iv. adult child.

H8.15 Determining an application for a 2022 Special Ukraine Visa

- a. A 2022 Special Ukraine Visa may be granted to a Nominated Family Member if an immigration officer is satisfied that they:
 - i. meet health requirements outlined in (e) below; and
 - ii. character requirements for temporary entry (AS); and
 - iii. are sponsored by an acceptable New Zealand sponsor (H8.20); and
 - iv. was ordinarily resident in Ukraine as at January 2022; and
 - v. meets family relationship requirements; and
 - vi. both they and their New Zealand sponsor are listed in the Invitation to Apply letter.

- 713 ITAs sent.
- 911 visa applications received.
- 777 visas approved.
- 212 people have arrived.

Application Details	Accepted (Applications)	Accepted (People)	Completed	Completed (People)
Special, Expression of Interest, Ukraine 2022	893	893	872	872
Visa, Student, Ukraine 2022	141	141	122	122
Visa, Work, Ukraine 2022	770	770	676	676
Total	1,804	1,804	1,670	1,670

Application Details	decision	Completed Applications
Special, Expression of Interest, Ukraine 2022	Cancelled - data entry error	65
	Declined Failed Instructions	84
	Inactivated/Duplicate application	2
	Invitation to Apply Sent	713
	Replaced by new application	4
	Withdrawn no fee refund	4
Visa, Student, Ukraine 2022	Approved	115
	Cancelled - data entry error	4
	Inactivated/Duplicate application	2
	Withdrawn no fee refund	1
Visa, Work, Ukraine 2022	Approved	662
	Cancelled - data entry error	3
	Withdrawn no fee refund	11
Total		1,670

- A group named 'Mahi for Ukraine' was set up to support Ukrainians and their families in New Zealand. They met with the Minister seeking a range of additional elements including a loosening of the policy criteria, a job search visa and a fund to assist families. They followed this up with a letter and a response is currently being considered. INZ have been having regular meetings with the group.

Offshore partners of temporary migrants

- This work has been suspended for most of the last two and a half years as border restrictions have been in place.
- Various 'split families' border exceptions have been put in place but they did not provide access for most of this cohort. Many tried using the humanitarian border exception route, however this had not been designed for family reunification situations.
- There were about 3,500 applications of this type in Hamilton. This work is now being progressed, with proactive communications being sent out to all applicants last week. In the first week 1,000 of these applications were allocated for assessment or withdrawal, based on advice from the customer.
- INZ has resumed the processing of general visitor visas for people who are in a relationship that INZ is satisfied is credible, but do not meet INZ's 'living together' requirements. Around 500 of these applications have been held in Hamilton during the period of border restrictions and are now being processed.

Pacific

- From 16 May people in Pacific Island Forum countries have been able to apply for visitor visas. In that time 1,400 visa applications have been accepted and 900 decided
- Reopening has been complicated by local lockdown conditions – meaning our offices in Apia and Nuku’alofa were operating skeleton staff. This means that applications can only be made online – so we can utilise other parts of the network to process this work.

Compliance

INZ speaker: Compliance Manager, Bernard Maritz

General Compliance update

- Still have issues with staffing – secondments and staff overseas etc. Not a lot of changes in this space.
- Deportation remains a challenge – massive issues with availability of flights and escorts. Not feasible to send Police to locations at risk of covid etc. Courier delays. Consulates are a lot slower now.
- Border closures still problematic, especially with the Pacific where it’s been difficult sending deportees back home. Criminal deportees remain a priority.
- Some of the people who would have been deported back home before COVID-19, have been released on conditions back to their community. They are closely supervised by Compliance, which is a drain on resources.
- With the borders opening up, Compliance is working to make sure people are aware of their visa obligations and conditions. Still serving deportation orders where required, but slow compared to previous years.
- Compliance works closely with Ministry of Foreign, Affairs and Trade to facilitate the return of prison release cases who are subject to deportation to Pacific countries and other destinations. This continues to be a priority and is resource-intensive work.
- Concerns that new migrants arriving in New Zealand may breach their visa conditions where unscrupulous employers exploit migrants to work for them in contravention of their visa conditions.
- Below the latest deportation statistics.

Deportation Data (July 2021 – May 2022)

**Compliance Cases Concluded as Deportation/Self-Deportation
Across Outcome Month and Deportation Type Between 1 July 2021 and 31 May 2022**

Outcome Month	Type of Deportation		Totals
	Deportation	Self Deportation	
2021-07	21	18	39
2021-08	18	14	30
2021-09	8	10	16
2021-10	7	5	12
2021-11	3	5	8
2021-12	6	8	14
2022-01	11	19	30
2022-02	10	11	21
2022-03	1	9	10
2022-04	9	12	21
2022-05	14	15	29
Totals	104	126	230

Refugee and Migrant Services:

INZ speaker: National Manager of Refugee and Migrant Support, Andrew Lockhart

Refugee Quota

- The Government have agreed to a three-year Refugee Quota Programme for the years 2022 through to 2025. The Government confirmed that the Quota in each of the next 3 years will resettle 1,500 refugees annually. The regional allocation provides for 50 % of the Quota to come from the Asia Pacific Region, 10% from the Americas, 20% from Africa and 20% from the Middle East. The other key decisions are;
 - Provide up to 75 places for refugees with medical conditions and disabilities, and the removal of the allocation within the subcategory for refugees with HIV or AIDS.
 - Settle up to 100 places for urgent or emergency resettlement submissions.
 - Have an allocation of 200 places for Afghan nationals in 2022/23, 250 in 2023/24, and 300 in 2024/25.
 - 150 places offered to Australia.

- 200 places (+/- 10 per cent) for large-scale refugee crisis situations (composition to be determined by joint ministers).
- Resettle at least 150 places for women at risk.

Refresh of the Refugee Resettlement Strategy and the Migrant Settlement and Integration Strategy (strategies)

- In late 2021, New Zealand agencies agreed to refresh the strategies to ensure continued effective support for successful settlement in the future, as well as providing the agility to respond to continued changes in the settlement environment. Work on the refresh began in 2022 (the refresh).
- The refresh will focus on reviewing the success indicators of both strategies to ensure they are still fit for purpose and reflect successful settlement outcomes sought by the Government, migrants, and former refugees as well as establishing the priorities for the work programme.
- The refresh will explore the categories of refugees and migrants to be covered under each of the two strategies.
- For the Refugee Resettlement Strategy, this will include exploring other refugee cohorts, such as Convention refugees, asylum seekers and Refugee Family Support Category.
- For the Migrant Strategy, this will include exploring previous recommendations to improve settlement support for migrants under the Samoa Quota and Pacific Access Category.
- Engagement with former refugees, migrants, iwi, community groups, NGOs and businesses will be a critical part of the refresh. We have identified over 300 Stakeholders and anticipate engagement with these groups to begin in June 2022 and continue through to September 2022.
- A steering group has also been established to provide advice and insights and ensure continued rigour of the work through the engagement and co-design phases. The Steering Group includes academics, former refugees with lived experience, recent migrants, business, iwi and local Council.
- The recommendations from the refresh are expected to be agreed by Senior Officials in October and to them go to Cabinet for decisions in November 2022.

Communications update:

INZ speaker: Manager of Communications and Engagement, Yvette Mckinley

General update and questions

- IRG keen to engage over this and would like to have a cup of tea over Zoom together. IRG keen to hear about the unit and how they work and increase engagement. The team is not part of INZ and works under the ministry, but their priorities are the same as INZ's.

- Currently very short staffed. The team is split between internal comms and external comms, with some staff working across the two. They deliver stakeholder comms and engagement plans but aren't on the frontline.
- Team receives feedback on comms from Engagement. Looking for more direct avenues to stakeholders and customers. Yvette can have a conversation with IRG about how communications can be more effective.
- Encountering difficulties in circulating positive news into the media – want to use stakeholder channels to get these messages out. E.g. newsletters etc.
- Goal of reference group is to work as a system and collaboratively, and communication (solutions focused) is key for this. Feedback from the IRG that it's good to hear from INZ about good news and bad news. The IRG says that INZ could give more good news.
- Feedback from IRG:
 - Unclear on the differences between operational and political decisions. IRG seeking further transparency around who is making the decisions. Want to make sure they are lobbying the correct group, whether it be INZ or the Minister's office.
 - IRG available as a resource for the Communications team, whether it be formal or informal. IRG would like to do what they can to provide feedback. Something that would be helpful for clients are FAQs.
 - Multiple conversations about FAQs being worked on. Working on an update to the website. Working on a news centre with a section similar to Q&A/FAQs. Working with Marketing team behind the scenes to get things out.
 - Organisational chart from comms and marketing to be sent through to IRG.

Casey Review

INZ speaker: Manager of System Action and Tasking, Alexis Coxon

General update and questions

- 'The Casey review', was commissioned by INZ and undertaken by Victoria Casey QC. It looks at INZ's operational practices, the structure of the detention regime under the Immigration Act 2009 (the Act), and the appropriateness of the use of Police and Corrections facilities to detain asylum seekers. Following the review, 11 recommendations were presented to INZ:
 - Legislative change – Part 9 of the Act (Meaning of unlawfully in New Zealand (in relation to person who is not a New Zealand citizen)).
 - Legislative change – Electric monitoring as an alternative to detention.

- Legislative change – Residence and Reporting Requirements Agreement not to be an ‘absolute discretion’.
 - Operational process – Pending legislative reform.
 - Operational process – Identify appropriate decision maker and ensure consistency making with 2021 UNHCR Guidelines.
 - Operational process – Work with Refugee Status United to promptly address identity concerns.
 - Operational process – Ensure Convention compliant internal review every 14 days.
 - Operational process – Ensure alternatives to detention are available.
 - Operational process – INZ take and retain responsibility for claimants that are subject to restrictions on their freedom.
 - Short term detention (without warrant) of new arrivals.
 - Detention at Corrections facilities should not occur.
- INZ has agreed to all the recommendations and the team are going through the implementation process. A new programme manager has joined the team and will be the front contact in future.
 - Policy phase vs operational phase. Policy phase will take time, 12 – 14 months. Operational front – only one cannot be delivered. Whole timeframe for operational delivery is six months.
 - Legislation changes required for electronic monitoring – can’t be implanted before that.
 - Policy team creating separate workstreams within INZ to deliver.
 - Engaging with Ministry of Justice in regard to legal aid requirements, changing detention guidelines, and exploring options for alternatives to police and corrections facilities in the short term.
 - Established within INZ a decision-making panel for asylum claims, where cases are raised to a panel which is available 24/7 (for if the decision is needed overnight etc). Panel consists of Chief Operating Officer (Chair), Stephen Vaughan, with representation from senior individuals in Verification and Compliance, Refugee and Migrant Support, and Special Counsel to provide legal advice.
 - INZ is establishing focus groups for these recommendations. A terms of reference is in draft. Opportunity for engagement between IRG and panel, as IRG and panel will have different viewpoints. Will pick this up after meeting.

Migrant welfare and sector wellbeing

INZ speaker: Manager of Regional Migrant Skills Retention, Nelson Sheridan

General update and questions

- There is an increasing number of employers asking about the timeframe for RV21 for their employees.
- Employers continue to enquire about the level and type of settlement information to be provided to AEWV migrant workers as a requirement for accreditation.
- Regional Relationship Managers are seeing more requests from Citizen Advice Bureaus (CABs) across New Zealand for educational workshops or webinars on “Immigration 101” and how to service their clients. Most staff are volunteers and may not have the foundational knowledge to assist the clients.
- Both service providers and victims of Family Violence have raised the issue of a long wait times when contacting the ICC telephone line. This feedback has been passed on internally.
- The first meeting with the Latino community in New Zealand took place on 30 May 2022 and was very well received. Latino community leaders and representatives appreciate the opportunity to engage with INZ, receive updates and information and share community concerns. They also recognise INZ’s effort in connecting with migrant communities, as well as our commitment to minimising harm from immigration and upholding our duty of care to all migrants.
- RMs have ongoing regular engagement with the Ukrainian community as the situation in Ukraine evolves and those with the Special Ukraine visas start to arrive. The “Mahi for Ukraine” group continues to advocate for more support and actions from the Government in terms of visa extensions, settlement funds for those who are here, and facilitating entry for those outside of NZ.
- INZ is providing more detail on our website and running webinars/seminars to help inform employers.
- INZ advised that those on temporary visas which are closed to expiring would be processed first, however many employers are concerned that their employees’ residence applications may not be processed in time. We’ve passed this on to INZ comms.
- Concerns from the Indian community that their applications are taking longer.
- Decisions on applications being delayed by things like national security certificates.
- Perception from Muslim and Asian communities that they are being discriminated against. Also questions from Iranian communities.
- Passport issue backlog. INZ has made contact with DIA and have identified people to follow up with. Nelson will follow up with an email to Deborah.
- Engagement work being done with Indian community alongside MFAT.
- Deborah and Nilu to follow up with Nelson about Family Violence work.
- IRG’s TOR makes reference to standing work groups. INZ to identify what some of those key standing work groups are e.g. privacy and family violence working groups. INZ to undertake a stocktake of engagement of working groups.

Please see the next page for a table of meeting actions.

ACTIONS

	Action	Response/Update	Expected date of completion
1	Deep-dive discussion on SMC. Looking at what worked and what didn't work.	Engagement to liaise with Melanee and IRG to set up further discussions to test ideas and the IRGs understanding of what is and isn't working. Will take place after MBIE Policy have consulted the new Minister of Immigration, Hon Wood	27/10/22
2	Discussion on how INZ's communications can be more effective. Explaining how the comms unit works	Yvette and IRG	27/08/22
3	Follow up regarding DIA passport backlog	Nelson and Deborah	23/08/22
4	Discussion about family violence work	Deborah and Nilu to follow up with Nelson	27/09/22
5	Establish a focus group for Casey review	Alexsis and IRG	27/09/22
6	Discussion between IRG and panel on Casey Review	IRG and Casey review panel	27/10/22
7	Engagement with the IRG to help establish RMS working groups	Questionnaire and engagement form to be sent out. Following engagement, five working groups will be	27/08/22

		established which will help with co-design of recommendations. IRG and Andrew Lockhart	
8	INZ to conduct a stocktake of engagement of working groups	Matt Gibbs and Liam Hadaway to undertake stocktake, with assistance from IRG and internal staff	27/07/22

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NEW ZEALAND
IMMIGRATION

NOTES FROM IMMIGRATION REFERENCE GROUP (IRG) QUARTERLY MEETING ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2022

Note: In order to provide notes that are up-to-date and contain correct information, some information has been updated to reflect changes and developments since the quarterly meeting occurred.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

Immigration New Zealand's (INZ's) Enhanced Immigration Online system

Transition from project work to business-as-usual (BAU)

- The 2021 Resident Visa, all three Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV) checks, and most Visitor Visas are currently being processed on Enhanced Immigration Online.
- Enhanced Immigration Online was previously being delivered by a project that finished on 30 September 2022. Work is continuing beyond the project ending as INZ transitions to a BAU approach. With the system transitioning from a project space to BAU, INZ will be able to put more of an emphasis on efficiency and error resolution.
- As INZ moves into BAU, there will be a greater emphasis on user and customer experience, including form testing. The IRG have offered to assist and can participate in testing activities in a timely manner.

Error resolution

- In terms of resolving any errors customers are experiencing with Enhanced Immigration Online, wide-ranging systematic issues affecting a high number of customers will be the highest priority. If customers are experiencing any errors with the system, they should raise these with Immigration New Zealand through normal channels and the errors will then be triaged based on prioritisation criteria that INZ uses.

Information recording

- Enhanced Immigration Online records everything that is being accessed in the system. Within this, INZ decides which information is critical to be able to access and report on. This allows INZ to ensure that requests such as privacy requests provide the customer with all of the information they need but do not overload them with unnecessary information.

Automation

- Generally, parts of the system that are automated are simple and have yes or no answers, such as whether an applicant has a New Zealand police certificate showing the applicant has criminal convictions.
- Currently, no visa applications are fully automated in Enhanced Immigration Online. INZ's goal is to increase automation over time as this will increase efficiency and accuracy. INZ would like to progress to a state where manual intervention is only required when there is an exception to the rule, but before this is enabled the risks need to be investigated and mitigated.
- INZ has strong principles about what not to automate, such as potentially prejudicial information (PPI) letters, partnership assessments, and certain areas of risk that are complex.

Compliance

Deportation work

- The availability of flights has improved recently, which means that the Compliance team have been undertaking more routine deportation work.
- Police are now able to travel to more destinations internationally to provide escort services. Airlines require police escorts when a person with a criminal conviction is being deported or where the airline perceives another potential risk that the deportee may pose.
- INZ has accepted all of the recommendations from the Casey review. The Compliance team have operationalised the restriction of freedom on asylum claimants who are now referred to a panel. For more information on the Casey Review please refer to INZ's website: [INZ accepts review recommendations relating to the detention of asylum seekers | Immigration New Zealand](#)
- The Compliance team continues to prioritise criminal deportation work where border closures and other COVID-related impediments caused a delay during the previous two years. Criminal deportees who could not be deported immediately following their release from prison are being managed in the community on strict parole release conditions and release conditions under the Immigration Act 2009. Where required they are provided with accommodation and financial support assistance prior to being deported.
- It remains difficult to deport people with criminal convictions to the Pacific Islands due to their borders having reopened only recently. The Compliance team expects the situation to improve within the next couple of months as more flights and opportunities to undertake deportations become available.

Migrant exploitation

- The IRG gave feedback that vulnerable migrants who are on temporary visas are unable to afford immigration advice, yet they need this to help deal with the fallout of being exploited. Feedback was also given that some migrants feel that they are used for prosecutions against exploitative or non-compliant employers and are then sent home. INZ was very concerned by these statements and will work with the IRG to get further information, including internal process and data information to inform further discussion.

Border and Visa Operations (BVO)

General operations

Note: Any statistics given are as at 31 September 2022.

- Some resources have been diverted from 2021 RV to Visitor Visas because of visa volumes that are higher than forecast.
- The Student Visa space is operating well, so no extra resources have been diverted towards Student Visas.
- INZ has approximately 370 Resident from Work (RfW) applications on hand.
- A team in Manukau is working through on-hand Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) applications. INZ has approximately 1,230 SMC applications, most of which are offshore. Most applications have been allocated and many of them are waiting on the applicant to provide further documents.
- The Green List Straight to Residence category has opened. INZ received 242 applications within the first few weeks and had approved about 20 as at 31 September. The most common occupations have been engineers and quantity surveyors, with the most common nationalities being China, United States, and India.

2021 Resident Visa 2021 (2021 RV)

- The 2021 RV category is approximately 53% complete. INZ has just under 400 applications on hand for phase 1 and has made nearly 32,000 decisions covering both phases, with over 1,000 applications being processed each week.
- The New Zealand Police have approximately 37,000 New Zealand police checks to complete for RV 2021.
- Some 2021 RV applications have included secondary applicants who do not meet the living together requirements.
 - In cases where INZ is satisfied that the relationship is genuine and stable, the application can be deferred to give them further time to meet the requirements.

- In cases where INZ is not satisfied that the partnership is genuine and stable, a PPI will be sent and if the response does not resolve the concerns the secondary applicant will be declined. INZ will not decline the whole application if the PA independently meets the instructions and they can be approved in their own right for 2021 RV.
- Feedback was received from the IRG that some secondary applicants who have withdrawn from 2021 RV applications have not been receiving withdrawal letters.
 - Update from INZ: Representatives/applicants should be receiving a formal letter confirming a decline/deferral/withdrawal from the immigration officer – if this has not happened for any application/s, please send application details to your Immigration Reference Group member and this will be investigated.
- There was previously an issue where some secondary applicants were mistakenly left out of 2021 RV applications - this has mostly been resolved now.

Investor migration

Policy changes

- The previous investor policy closed on the 28th of July and the new Active Investor Plus (AIP) Visa opened on the 19th of September. INZ has received three applications and no decisions have been made on these applications (as at 11 November 2022).
- INZ held a webinar about the AIP Visa on the 29th of September and the recording has been [uploaded to the INZ YouTube channel](#).
- Key requirements of the AIP Visa include:
 - English language requirements for the principal applicant
 - An increased investment threshold
 - Ability for some of the capital transferred to New Zealand to come through third party accounts
 - Change in travel conditions from two to five years
 - Online rather than paper-based application process

Role of New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE)

- NZTE, rather than INZ, is now responsible for attracting investors to New Zealand and determining acceptable investments.
- NZTE is setting up an investment committee in November that will help to determine which companies are acceptable investments. NZTE will provide INZ with a letter stating an intended investment into a private company is 'acceptable'. Also, NZTE will have a list of funds on their website that INZ will refer to as acceptable fund investments.

Processing

- The Minister of Immigration has signed off instructions which state that the new category will be prioritised when it comes to processing. New applications received will be allocated quickly and decision-ready applications will be processed fast.
- INZ has approximately 850 applications currently in the investor queue from before the previous policy was closed. Around 120 of these were received in the last couple of weeks before the policy was closed. The Business Migration Branch is working hard to get through the backlog.
- Allocation time for Investor 1 applications is approximately four months. Most, if not all, of the applications will be allocated in that time.
- Investor 2 allocation is currently around 20 months. INZ is working to hire and train new staff to increase the number of business immigration specialists working on the backlog.

Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV)

Note: Any statistics given are as at 7 November 2022 unless otherwise stated.

- All three AEWV checks – employer accreditation, the job check, and the migrant check – are now processed in Enhanced Immigration Online (also known as ADEPT). This is helping to speed up processing and increase productivity.
- Employer accreditation applications are now in flow with 13,517 approved. The average processing time for completed employer accreditation applications is five weekdays (as at 31 October 2022).
- INZ has approved 12,985 job checks for 76,593 roles. The average processing time for completed job check applications is five weekdays (as at 31 October 2022).
- INZ has approved 9,348 Accredited Employer Work Visas and there are around 10,000 applications on hand. The average processing time for completed AEWV applications is 13 weekdays (as at 31 October 2022).
- INZ has approved over 1,000 health sector job checks and around 375 education sector job checks so far (as at 5 Nov 2022).

MBIE Policy (MPOL) update

General update

- The interim reopening of the SMC has now been announced, with a period of consultation having commenced.
- The AEWV policy and the Immigration Rebalance are currently being worked on. MPOL is progressing sector agreements and is planning a review of the Green List in 2023. The reopening of the Parent Category has also been announced.
- Decisions have been made about variation of conditions (VOCs) and INZ Operational Policy are figuring out how to best implement them. They are scheduled to open around November. INZ's goal is to come up with a VOC process that is simple and easy to understand.

Update on the family violence visa pathway

- The Victims of Family Violence Visas are currently being looked at in two phases of work. The first phase is progressing rapidly and includes looking at eligibility of temporary migrants for a Victims of Family Violence Visa, as currently only temporary migrants who are partners of NZ residents or citizens are eligible.
- MBIE is aware of the risk of migrants feeling like they can't escape family violence because of fears about their visa status, and there have been a number of other issues raised about the Victims of Family Violence Visas too.
- MBIE are aiming to brief the Minister of Immigration on the eligibility for Victims of Family Violence Visas by the end of October 2022, and expect that further work will be part of the Family and Partnership Review scheduled to begin in 2023.

Refugee and migrant support

Update on the Refugee Family Support (RFS) category

- Settlement support is being provided to both the sponsor and approved family under the changes to the Refugee Family Support category.
- Refugee criteria remains the same, but the Government is now paying for air fares and medicals for refugees. INZ has a team that organises medicals and travel for refugees.
- The new customer journey provides both the assessment of the immigration criteria and the settlement support services during that process. This includes supporting sponsors to develop the housing plan, organising the offshore medical, and arranging and meeting the cost for airfares once the case is approved.

Eligibility of Refugee Family Support (RFS) category tier one sponsors

- The number of refugee places under the Refugee Family Support category has increased from 300 to 600. Tier one applications have processing priority over tier two applications.
- Under tier one of the RFS Category, you need to have no immediate family (other than dependents) in New Zealand. Due to Covid-19 delays, there are some cases where children have grown up and have become independent, putting sponsors into a position where they have a relative in New Zealand who is not a dependent. This has led to some people being 'aged out' of the category.
- The IRG has received feedback that there are concerns about the above cases. A paper is expected to go to the Minister in either November or December 2022 for guidance on whether to make any changes to address this.

Immigration Contact Centre (ICC)

Immigration adviser line

- Approximately 60% of calls on the immigration adviser line are about application status updates. ICC has noticed an increasing trend of callers calling multiple times on the line, with around 76% of callers having called more than 20 times on the line.
- The immigration adviser line has much shorter wait times than the other lines because it is given a higher priority. The line is open till 10pm. ICC is looking to extend opening hours.
- A high number of people are phoning across all lines first thing in the morning, which results in longer wait times as the ICC can have 300 calls waiting as soon as they open. Calling later in the day will help reduce wait times.

General updates

- ICC are consistently receiving high volumes of calls. A normal amount of calls is around 3,000 per day, but at the moment ICC are receiving over 4,000 per day.
- The only way to reduce ICC wait times is to reduce call volumes or hire more staff. Staff turnover is quite high but also consistent with MBIE's other service centre. ICC has been recruiting steadily.
- Two ICC teams will be hired in Christchurch for the first time to take advantage of the buoyant recruitment market. Around 140 applied, but it's important to note that it takes time to train new staff.
- The IRG suggested that ICC could provide 24/7 service, however ICC would need to discuss this with relevant unions and may encounter difficulty with recruiting staff for overnight shifts.

- The IRG gave feedback that lack of customer visibility over what's happening to their application in Enhanced Immigration Online leads to more calls, however the ICC are often unable to give more information than what can be viewed online:
 - There are limits on what an ICC client services advisor (CSA) can tell customers as they are not warranted officers. ICC can give advice on what stage an application is at and how long a customer might need to wait based on published processing time, however they can't give technical advice on how to complete certain processes/activities or tell customers how long that will take.
 - ICC CSAs can't view as much in Enhanced Immigration Online as they could in the previous system, but the system is progressing applications in the background and ICC are working with INZ to increase visibility and improve the external dashboard
 - If an application is at 'awaiting information' stage, a case officer hasn't been assigned yet, so ICC will be unable to provide more information. Applications are not necessarily assigned to a case officer at the start of the application journey anymore in the Enhanced Immigration Online system.
- ICC continues to feed customer issues back to INZ. As everyone becomes more familiar with Enhanced Immigration Online, processes and customer experiences will improve.
- ICC and INZ will be working to cultivate a culture change, as the new Enhanced Immigration Online system works differently to the previous system; immigration officers may now only work on one stage/activity for an application and will not view the rest of the application, while under the previous system an immigration officer would work on/view all stages/activities for an application.
- ICC staff are receiving resilience training to help them with difficult callers. Staff often find dealing with certain callers tough, particularly when they are new.