



05 DEC 2019

Satish

fyi-request-11454-4a36a1e7@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: DOIA 1920-0625

Dear Mr Bamal

Thank you for your email of 15 October 2019 to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), the following information:

- I would like to understand how many SMC Applications got assigned to a case officer who fulfilled the INZ internal Criteria in the year 2019 and when did this practice became effective, and how many application from the normal (not prioritized ones) SMC queues have got case officer assigned from Dec 2018 to Oct 2019 (Month wise). I am also interested to understand how long (in the number of months/days) is INZ taking to get a case officer assigned to an application once the application is lodged in year 2019.*

On 17 October 2019 you were contact by Penny Hazlett to clarify your request. Subsequently, your request was confirmed to be:

- How many Case Officers (irrespective of new or existing CO) are assigned in each month of 2019 on the Application that has met INZ internal criteria of prioritizing Application (1. criteria of being working for a govt organization, 2. work requiring occupational registration like doctor and nurses 3. People earning a salary above high remuneration which is more than 106K/year).*
- When (which Month to specific) did the INZ put this practice of prioritizing SMC Application (based on three points I have mentioned in question 1) and is INZ still following this process?*
- How many SMC Applications (non-prioritised) were assigned to Case Officers from the Managed queue in each month from 1 Dec 2018 up to Oct 2019 (each month's detailed break up).*
- How long (in the number of days) is INZ taking to assign Case Officers to the SMC Applications that are in Normal (not meeting the internal criteria of INZ) queue?*

Our Response

Questions 1 -2

The internal criteria that you have referred to is part of a larger prioritisation processing order. The prioritisation process is for all categories of skilled residence applications processed at Manukau office. This includes Skilled Migrant Category and the Residence from Work Categories. Manukau office is allocating applications in the following order:

- Employment Visa Escalations (EVE) approved applications.
- Applications that meet any of the following criteria:
 - Returned from the IPT for reassessment;
 - Removal of s49(1)(a) conditions; or
 - Deferred under immigration instruction SM21.10 where an offer of employment has been submitted (for applications pre-27/8/2017).
- Applications that meet any of the following criteria:
 - Residence from Work – Talent and Accredited Employer; **or**
 - Remuneration is above the high remuneration threshold listed in immigration instructions – minimum hourly rate of \$50.00 or \$104,00 per annum; **or**
 - Job offer or employment with an Accredited Employer; **or**
 - Applicants with current occupational registration and that registration is required by immigration instructions.
- Allocation from the queue in date order of when the application was accepted for processing by INZ.



When an application is prioritised in line with the above, it is then forwarded to a team for allocation and processing. So to answer your question, there are no immigration officers assigned to the prioritised applications. A prioritised application could be processed by any of the 58 Immigration Officers processing skilled residence applications in the Manukau office.

Question 3

This prioritisation process has been in place since July 2018.

Immigration New Zealand (INZ) reserves the right to update or make changes to the order in which visa applications will be prioritised. You will note that employment with Government is no longer a priority criterion. It was removed in August 2019.

Question 3

We do not hold information as to when an application is allocated to an immigration officer in a reportable format. To obtain this information the application's electronic notes would need to be manually checked.

As stated above we cannot determine which applications were allocated for processing from 1 December 2018 to October 2019, however, the scale of this task can be seen via the numbers of SMC applications *accepted* for processing prior to and during this timeframe. At Appendix A you will find the total number per month of SMC applications accepted for processing from January 2018 to October 2019.

As such the request is refused in reliance of s18(f) of the OIA as to make the information available would entail substantial collation and research.

In accordance with s18A of the OIA, I have considered whether fixing a charge under s15 or extending the time limit under s15A would enable the request to be granted but it is my view it would not. In accordance with s18B of the OIA, I have considered whether consulting with you would remove the reason for refusal, however, in my view it would not as to obtain the specific information would involve the manual search of thousands of electronic applications.

Question 4

There is no set number of days for INZ to allocate an application for processing. To calculate this would require a manual search of the electronic notes for thousands of residence applications. As such this request is refused under s18(f) of the OIA as to make this information available would entail substantial collation and research.

However, I can advise that as of 22 November 2019 the oldest SMC application in the managed queue is from 10 December 2018.

In accordance with s18A of the OIA, I have considered whether fixing a charge under s15 or extending the time limit under s15A would enable the request to be granted but it is my view it would not. In accordance with s18B of the OIA, I have considered whether consulting with you would remove the reason for refusal, however, in my view it would not as to obtain the specific information would involve the manual search of thousands of electronic applications.

New Zealand Residence Programme

INZ is resourced to meet the current New Zealand Residence Programme (NZRP) Planning Range set by the Government. The current Planning Range is for 50,000 to 60,000 residence approvals from 1 July 2018 to 31 December 2019. Further information in regards to the NZRP can be found on INZ's website at the below link.

<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/media-centre/news-notifications/government-updates-new-zealand-residence-programme>

I trust you find the information helpful. 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 or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request or this response, or if you require any further assistance, please contact Penny Hazlett, Business Advisor penny.hazlett@mbie.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Nicola Hogg', is positioned above the printed name.

Nicola Hogg
General Manager – Border & Visa Operations
Immigration New Zealand
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

Appendix A

Month	Application Criteria	Total
31/01/2018	Skilled Migrant	1,635
28/02/2018	Skilled Migrant	1,383
31/03/2018	Skilled Migrant	1,503
30/04/2018	Skilled Migrant	1,143
31/05/2018	Skilled Migrant	1,896
30/06/2018	Skilled Migrant	1,578
31/07/2018	Skilled Migrant	1,491
31/08/2018	Skilled Migrant	1,896
30/09/2018	Skilled Migrant	1,650
31/10/2018	Skilled Migrant	1,524
30/11/2018	Skilled Migrant	2,118
31/12/2018	Skilled Migrant	1,683
31/01/2019	Skilled Migrant	1,656
28/02/2019	Skilled Migrant	2,154
31/03/2019	Skilled Migrant	2,070
30/04/2019	Skilled Migrant	2,073
31/05/2019	Skilled Migrant	2,256
30/06/2019	Skilled Migrant	2,250
31/07/2019	Skilled Migrant	3,357
31/08/2019	Skilled Migrant	2,619
30/09/2019	Skilled Migrant	2,421
31/10/2019	Skilled Migrant	2,382
Total		42,738

*data obtained from https://mbienz.shinyapps.io/migration_data_explorer/