



20 August 2020

Reno Chalakkal

fyi-request-12774-7a4b7d2a@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: DOIA 1920-0185

Dear Reno Chlakkal

I refer to your request under the Official Information Act 1982 received on 23 July 2020 requesting the following:

- 1. What are the oldest application currently in the general queue and priority queue that has not been allocated to a case officer yet (an on the date this request will be answered)?*
- 2. Also, on average how many applications from the general queue are allotted case officer post lockdown when the immigration officers were able to return to work in May?*
- 3. Whether the case officer allocation time is included in the average processing time given on the Immigration New Zealand website (which is currently 17 months)? If not why? Isn't this violation of customer rights, by giving misleading information?*
- 4. Can Immigration advertise on their website two separate processing times (including the allocation delay time) for SMC visas? One for the general queue and one for the prioritized queue. This could help future applicants.*

Our response

While the Government works through the New Zealand Residence Program (NZRP), Immigration New Zealand (INZ) continues to process applications at the same volume and with the same level of resourcing the previous NZRP allowed for. More information on the NZRP can be found on the INZ Website - [New Zealand Residence Program](#).

Over the last year, demand for the Skilled Migrant Category and Residence from Work sub-stream has risen significantly and the number of on hand applications has increased considerably. This has resulted in longer decision times for applicants.

Residence applications generally take longer to process than temporary applications as a residence visa allows an individual to reside in New Zealand permanently. Therefore, there is greater scrutiny of each application, which means processing times will be longer and the allocation of new applications to an immigration officer may also take longer.

The answers to your specific questions are below.

1. As at 28 July 2020 the oldest application in the priority queue is dated 14 May 2020 and the oldest application in the non-priority queue is dated 20 December 2018.

2. I am not able to provide allocation number for the month of May because we were not recording the breakdown of allocations at that time. We only started recording the breakdown between priority and non-priority in June. For June and July 2020 an average of 21 applications per week were allocated from the general (non-priority) queue.
3. The processing time for SMC applications published on the Immigration New Zealand (INZ) website is from the date the application is received by INZ until the date it is decided. This is the way that INZ calculates the processing time across all visa application types and reflects the entire length of time it has taken for the application to be processed.
4. Thank you for raising this point. I have referred your suggestion on to the appropriate team within INZ for further consideration.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review of my response/decision to withhold certain information by the Ombudsman, whose address for contact purposes is:

The Ombudsman
Office of the Ombudsman
PO Box 10-152
WELLINGTON 6143

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request or this response, or if you require any further assistance, please contact Matt Burden, Senior Business Advisor, Operations Support at Matt.Burden@mbie.govt.nz

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nicola Hogg', is written over a light blue circular watermark.

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