



31 August 2020

Paul McCarthy

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File No: DOIA 1920 –1705

Dear Paul

Thank you for your email on 4 June 2020, requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA):

- 1. I am writing to request the number of applications that are currently held in the non-priority queue by Immigration New Zealand under the Skilled Migrant Category?*
- 2. Also from this how many applications are held that the date of lodgement falls on or before the 12th February 2019.*
- 3. Again from this number of non-priority cases lodged on or before the 12th February 2019, how many of these applications are noted as onshore applications?*
- 4. What is the oldest date of lodged application within the non-priority queue?*
- 5. How many Case officers do Immigration New Zealand have working on the SMC applications overall? Are any of this team of Case officers devoted to the Non-Priority Queue?*

Our response

The skilled residence applications processed in the Manukau office are made up of Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) and Residence from Work (RFW) applications. They are not split into two separate queues based on the application category. Once an application is accepted for processing it is then identified as to whether it meets the prioritisation criteria, or not, and triaged into either the priority or non-priority queue. The type of application is not relevant to the prioritisation.

Over the last couple of years, demand for the SMC and RFW sub-stream has risen significantly. This has resulted in longer decision times for applicants.

To better manage the queue of residence applications going forward, in February 2020 Immigration New Zealand (INZ), with the endorsement of the Minister of Immigration at the time, formalised the priority allocation of some SMC and RFW applications for highly paid applicants and applicants with current occupational registration (where registration is required by Immigration Instructions).

This allowed INZ to start allocating older, non-priority applications on a more consistent basis.

Residence applications take longer to process as there is more at stake and there is greater scrutiny of each application, which means there is a flow-on effect and the allocation of new applications to an immigration officer can take longer.

1. As at 20 August, the number of applications that are currently held in the Non-Priority Queue by INZ under the skilled residence category are 14,573.
2. From the 14,573 applications currently in the non-priority queue, 179 applications were accepted by INZ for processing on or before 12 February 2019.
3. From the 179 non-priority applications accepted by INZ on or before the 12th February 2019, 86 applications are noted as onshore applications.
4. The oldest accepted date for an onshore application to be processed by INZ within the non-priority queue is 18 January 2019.
5. The number of Immigration Officers which are working on the Skilled Resident queue as of 25 August 2020 is 71. These Immigration Officers have caseloads which come from both the priority and non-priority queue.

Of the 14,573 applications which are in the non-priority queue, 1,539 applications have applicants located offshore. The oldest application in the queue off-shore is dated 14 December 2018. INZ cannot currently decide applications whose applicants are offshore due to COVID related border restrictions; therefore, these applications will not be allocated for assessment at this time.

13,034 applications remain in the onshore non-priority queue waiting allocation.

You have the right to contest the decision to withhold information by seeking an investigation and review of that decision by the Ombudsman. 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 Adam Jones, Business Advisor, Operations Support, Immigration New Zealand at adam.jones@mbie.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely



Steve McGill
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Immigration New Zealand
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment