



20 July 2020

Junlong

fyi-request-13078-8d5dd6f1@requests.fyi.org.nz

File No: DOIA 1920-1748

Dear Junlong

Thank you for your email of 11 June 2020, requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA):

I would like to request information about Skilled Migrant Category visa application as below:

- 1. How many case officers are assigned to process SMC visa application, and how many out of them are assigned to look after the non-priority queue?*
- 2. As of the date this request is answered, how many applications waiting for allocation are tagged as prioritised?*
- 3. I am aware that INZ started the priority criteria for SMC, so how many non-prioritised applications get approved in each month since then until May 2020?*
- 4. As replied somewhere else, the allocation of priority queue is at Nov 2019, could you please explain why I have heard quite a few applications got prioritised after Nov 2019 have been allocated and approved already? How is Nov 2019 calculated as the result for those replies?*
- 5. Since Aug 2019, non-priority queue almost stays still until now, based on this pace, it will take decades to get the current applications on hand (around 30,000) approved, is there any plan in discussion to mitigate this situation?*

An email was sent to you on the 15 June 2020, requesting a timeframe for part three of your request. You clarified your request to be the following:

- Number of approved non-prioritised SMC applications in each month between Aug 2019 and May or June (if available) 2020.

Our response

1. How many case officers are assigned to process SMC visa application, and how many out of them are assigned to look after the non-priority queue?

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 application category. Once an application is accepted for processing it is then triaged into a priority or non-priority queue.

As at 4 June 2020, there are 72 immigration officers (IOs) who process all skilled residence applications from both the priority and non-priority queues.

2. As of the date this request is answered, how many applications waiting for allocation are tagged as prioritised?

As at 2 July 2020, there are 445 SMC applications waiting for allocation that meet the prioritisation criteria.

3. Number of approved non-prioritised SMC applications in each month between Aug 2019 and May or June (if available) 2020.

The priority rules only determine which applications are given priority to be allocated to an immigration officer for processing. Immigration New Zealand (INZ) does not collect data on the number of priority or non-priority applications approved or declined beyond the point of allocation.

Information on the number of approved non-priority applications is not held in reportable format.

3,928 Skilled Migrant Category applications were approved between August 2019 and June 2020. To provide you with the number of non-prioritised SMC applications approved would require manually checking each of the 3,928 applications. This part of your request is therefore refused under section 18(f) of the OIA as it would require substantial collation or research.

4. As replied somewhere else, the allocation of priority queue is at Nov 2019, could you please explain why I have heard quite a few applications got prioritised after Nov 2019 have been allocated and approved already? How is Nov 2019 calculated as the result for those replies?

The INZ website reflects the allocation processing time for applications currently in the priority and non-priority queue. November 2019 was the lodgement date for applications that INZ was allocating from at the time. Note this date is updated regularly as we move through the queue. Further information can be found here: <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/media-centre/news-notifications/how-we-prioritise-resident-visa-applications/smc-and-rfw-timeframe-information>.

A16.1 (f) of the INZ Operational Manual gives INZ the ability to prioritise some applications outside of date order as individual circumstances warrant. Further information can be found here: https://www.immigration.govt.nz/documents/amendment-circulars/amendment-circular-2020_04.pdf. This may include applications referred by the Immigration Protection Tribunal (IPT) for re-assessment, applications requiring reassignment due to staff movement, and those escalated through the Employment Visa Escalation (EVE) process.

Applications prioritised as a result of A16.1 (f) can be from either queue mentioned above and therefore are not reflected on the immigration website.

5. ***Since Aug 2019, non-priority queue almost stays still until now, based on this pace, it will take decades to get the current applications on hand (around 30,000) approved, is there any plan in discussion to mitigate this situation?***

The New Zealand Residence Programme (NZRP), which is set by the Government of the day, includes a planning range for the number of residence applications approved each financial year.

Whilst INZ is doing everything possible to minimise visa processing delays, INZ can only process applications at the same volume and with the same level of resourcing as the previous New Zealand Residence Programme planning range allowed for. There are no discussions at the moment to vary the current SMC and RFW allocation criteria.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information on about how to make 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 Ileini Taloa, Business Advisor, Operations Support, Immigration New Zealand at ileini.taloea@mbie.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely



Nicola Hogg

General Manager Border and Visa Operations
Immigration New Zealand
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment