



13 November 2020

Anatoliy Goryachev

[fyi-request-13605-49a69ef8@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-13605-49a69ef8@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Ref: DOIA 2021-0444

Dear Anatoliy Goryachev,

Thank you for your email of 27 August 2020 requesting under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA), the following information:

*"1) Going through previous FYI responses, I see that you keep posting us with weekly statistics on the allocation numbers for priority and non-priority queues. The latest data we have was for the week commencing 27 July 2020. Therefore, could I please ask you to provide CO (thereafter CO – Case Officer) allocation figures for the following weeks (separately for priority and non-priority queues):*

- a) Week commencing 03 August 2020 – Number of priority applications got CO / Number of non-priority applications got CO*
- b) Week commencing 10 August 2020 – Number of priority applications got CO / Number of non-priority applications got CO*
- c) Week commencing 17 August 2020 – Number of priority applications got CO / Number of non-priority applications got CO*
- d) Week commencing 24 August 2020 – Number of priority applications got CO / Number of non-priority applications got CO*

*2) What is the lodgement date for the oldest non-priority SMC/RFW application?*

*3) What is the total number of non-priority applications in SMC/RFW non-priority queue currently awaiting for CO allocation? Also, please provide number of applicants behind these applications.*

*4) If this is possible - could you please provide breakdown on the number of offshore and onshore applications (applicants) awaiting for allocation in the SMC/RFW non-priority queue.*

*5) What is the number of priority SMC/RFW applications currently awaiting for officer allocation?*

*6) Do you process offshore priority SMC applications? Are these applications being prioritized over non-priority SMC/RFW onshore applications?*

*7) Could you please provide monthly breakdown numbers on how many non-priority SMC/RFW applications/applicants who lodged their applications last year (2019) are waiting for CO allocation:*

- a) January 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation*

- b) February 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation
- c) March 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation
- d) April 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation
- e) May 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation
- f) June 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation
- g) July 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation
- h) August 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation
- i) September 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation
- j) October 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation
- k) November 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation
- l) December 2019 - Number of applications waiting for CO allocation / Number of applicants waiting for CO allocation

8) When did Immigration New Zealand adopt the policy of application prioritisation and when it was first shared with broad public?

9) What is the definition of "reasonable timeframe" for the SMC/RFW applications?

## Our Response

**Question 1: Going through previous FYI responses, I see that you keep posting us with weekly statistics on the allocation numbers for priority and non-priority queues. The latest data we have was for the week commencing 27 July 2020. Therefore, could I please ask you to provide CO (thereafter CO – Case Officer) allocation figures for the following weeks (separately for priority and non-priority queues):**

- a) Week commencing 03 August 2020 – Number of priority applications got CO / Number of non-priority applications got CO**
- b) Week commencing 10 August 2020 – Number of priority applications got CO / Number of non-priority applications got CO**
- c) Week commencing 17 August 2020 – Number of priority applications got CO / Number of non-priority applications got CO**
- d) Week commencing 24 August 2020 – Number of priority applications got CO / Number of non-priority applications got CO**

Please see table below which shows the number of Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) and Residence from Work (RFW) applications allocated to a case officer from the onshore priority and non-priority queues during the weeks you have requested:

Week Commencing Date	Priority Queue	Non Priority Queue
03 August 2020	154	48
10 August 2020	168	37
17 August 2020	165	4
24 August 2020	116	149

**Question 2: What is the minimum accepted date for an application in the non-priority SMC/RFW queue as at the most recent on-hand date?**

As at 9 November 2020, the oldest application accepted for processing in the onshore non-priority queue was accepted on 1 May 2019.

**Question 3: What is the total number of non-priority applications in SMC/RFW non-priority queue currently awaiting for CO allocation? Also, please provide number of applicants behind these applications.**

As at 2 November 2020, there were 14,343 SMC and RFW applications on hand in the non-priority queue. Multiple people can be included in one visa application; the total number of individual people included in the non-priority queue is 31,645.

**Question 4: If this is possible - could you please provide breakdown on the number of offshore and onshore applications (applicants) awaiting for allocation in the SMC/RFW non-priority queue.**

The table below shows the number of applications and applicants (principle and secondary) on hand in the non-priority queue as at 2 November 2020, broken down by the current location of the principle applicant (onshore/offshore) as at 2 November 2020:

Location of client	Number of applications	Number of people
In New Zealand	12,725	27,164
Outside New Zealand	1,618	4,481

**Question 5: How many applications are in the SMC/RFW priority queue as at the most recent on-hand date?**

As at 2 November 2020 there were 47 SMC and RFW applications on hand in the priority queue.

It should be noted that INZ is not currently processing visa applications from individuals who are offshore. This is because legally INZ is unable to grant visas to individuals who are unlikely to meet entry requirements to New Zealand.

**Question 6: Do you process offshore priority SMC applications? Are these applications being prioritized over non-priority SMC/RFW onshore applications?**

Applications are processed in the order and manner of processing outlined in Immigration Instructions at A16.1. A16.1 details that first priority will be given to residence class visas where the applicant is in New Zealand. Within this, further prioritisation criteria will apply to applications under SMC and RFW with job offers where applicants have an hourly rate equivalent to or higher than twice the median wage; or applicants who hold current occupational registration where registration is required by immigration instructions.

Second priority will be given to residence class visa applications where the applicant is offshore (other than those that meet criteria for prioritisation above).

**Question 7: As at the most recent on-hand date, for SMC/RFW applications accepted in each calendar month of 2019, how many applications and applicants remain in the non-priority queue?**

The table below shows the number of SMC and RFW applications, and applicants (principle and secondary) on hand in the onshore non-priority queue as at 2 November 2020 that were accepted for processing

during 2019 and are still awaiting allocation to an immigration officer. As noted in questions 2, all applications lodged on or before 1 May 2019, whether they are priority or non-priority, have been allocated to a case officer:

Month accepted	Number of applications	Number of applicants
May	417	901
June	564	1,164
July	940	1,913
August	822	1,730
September	758	1,539
October	838	1,801
November	925	2,006
December	912	2,003

**Question 8: When did Immigration New Zealand adopt the policy of application prioritisation and when it was first shared with broad public?**

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.

Since mid-2018, INZ has prioritised allocation of SMC and RFW applications where the principal applicant worked in an occupation requiring registration, was highly paid or applied under the Residence from Work – Talent (Accredited Employer) category.

To better manage the queue of residence applications going forward, in February 2020 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.

**Question 9: What is the definition of "reasonable timeframe" for the SMC/RFW applications?**

A reasonable timeframe is the amount of time which is necessary to undertake a certain task, as soon as circumstances permit. Applications that don't meet the criteria for prioritisation are allocated to an immigration officer in the order they are received as soon as circumstances permit.

Once an application is allocated, an immigration officer will then assess the application to check that the applicant and any family included can be granted a visa. Applicants will be contacted when an application has been allocated to an immigration officer, who will advise if any further information is required.

The time taken to assess an application can vary considerably. This depends on the quality of the supporting documents and whether we require further information or verification of the information provided.

Any updates in regards to the allocation of applications can be found via the following link: [www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/media-centre/news-notifications/how-we-prioritise-resident-visa-applications/smc-and-rfw-timeframe-information](http://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/media-centre/news-notifications/how-we-prioritise-resident-visa-applications/smc-and-rfw-timeframe-information)

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of the decision to refuse parts of your request. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request or this response, please contact Lautalie Leausa Vaa, Senior Business Advisor, Operations Support, Immigration New Zealand at [Lautalie.Leausavaa@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:Lautalie.Leausavaa@mbie.govt.nz).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nicola Hogg', written in a cursive style.

Nicola Hogg  
General Manager - Border and Visa Operations  
Immigration New Zealand