



18 SEP 2020

Raman Kumar

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File No: DOIA 2021 – 0447

Dear Raman Kumar

Thank you for your email on 28 August 2020, requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA):

*What is the lodgement date for the oldest SMC application in the non priority queue And What is the lodgement date for the oldest SMC application in the priority queue?*

**Our response**

*What is the lodgement date for the oldest SMC application in the non priority queue*

Immigration New Zealand (INZ) does not have a specific Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) non-priority queue but one for skilled residence applications. These applications are SMC and Residence from Work (RFW). The applications are not split into two separate queues based on the application category.

Please note that the non-priority information only relates to applications where the applicants are in New Zealand. Non-priority applications for applicants who are outside of New Zealand are currently on hold. This is because people who are not New Zealand citizens or residents are unlikely to be able to travel to New Zealand while our border is closed. INZ is not legally able to grant a visa to people who are unlikely to meet the entry requirements.

I can advise that as of the information we held on 7 September 2020, the oldest application in the Skilled Residence onshore non-priority queue was lodged on 15 February 2019.

*What is the lodgement date for the oldest SMC application in the priority queue?*

As stated above, INZ does not have a specific SMC queue. I can advise that as of the information we held on 7 September 2020, the oldest application in the Skilled Residence priority queue was lodged on 7 August 2020.

Over the last couple of years, demand for the Skilled Residence sub-stream has risen significantly. This has resulted in longer decision times for applicants. In February 2020 INZ, with the endorsement

of the Minister of Immigration at the time, formalised the priority allocation of some Skilled Residence applications for highly paid applicants and applicants with current occupational registration. Immigration Instructions A16.1 sets out the order of visa processing for both residence and temporary entry class visa applications. Allocations of applications to immigration officers occur weekly and the number of applications that are allocated is dependent upon processing capacity.

The New Zealand Residence Program (NZRP) Planning Range sets the upper and lower number for residence visa approvals. The last NZRP ran from 1 July 2018 until 31 December 2019 and included a Planning Range of 50,000 to 60,000 residence approvals.

The Government is currently reviewing its approach to the NZRP and is considering replacing the planning range with a more targeted approach that focuses on management of specific residence visa types. In the meantime, INZ will continue to process applications at same volume and with the same level of resourcing as the previous NZRP allowed for. The INZ website remains the best place for up-to-date information on processing timeframes:

<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/new-zealand-visas/waiting-for-a-visa/how-long-it-takes-to-process-your-visa-application>

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request or this response, please contact Chung Man Charmaine Ho, Business Advisor, Operations Support, Immigration New Zealand at Charmaine.Ho@mbie.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely



Steve McGill

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