



09 NOV 2020

Nithin Ouseph
fyi-request-14065-62a37863@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: DOIA 2021 - 0925

Dear Nithin Ouseph

Thank you for your email of 31 October 2020, requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA):

1. Could you please let me know, total number of SMC and RFW applications awaiting allocation onshore only (all pending)
2. How long will it take INZ to clear backlogs for SMC and RFW onshore only (estimated time)

Our response

As of 2 November 2020, Immigration New Zealand (INZ) held 12,804 onshore Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) and Residence from Work (RFW) applications that are pending allocation to immigration officers.

The length of time it can take to process an application depends on a number of factors including the complexity of the application, whether it is received with all the information needed to make a decision, and the number of other visa applications being processed at the same time.

Based on the above reasons, we are unable to estimate how long it will take INZ to clear the onshore SMC and RFW queue. As the information requested does not exist, this part of your request is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the OIA. The below page at the INZ website remains the best place for up-to-date information on processing times:

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

I can advise that over the last couple of years, demand for the Skilled Residence sub-stream (SMC and RFW) has risen significantly. This has resulted in longer decision times for applicants. 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.

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.



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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.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or free phone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request or this response, please contact Dongrui Pang, Operations Support, Immigration New Zealand at Dongrui.Pang@mbie.govt.nz

Yours sincerely



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