



11 April 2023

Muhammad

fyi-request-22102-e24ce8a1@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: DOIA 2223-2065

Tēnā koe Muhammad,

Thank you for your email of 14 March 2023 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- 1. Why is the processing time of SMC applications not updated weekly/monthly like RV21?*
- 2. It would be great to see the current processing time of SMC applications, so migrants can make an informed decision whether to apply for SMC or not. It would also help the migrants in making relocation decisions to New Zealand. Many migrants applied when the INZ website showed a processing time of only 12 months and now they are waiting for more than 3 years for a decision. Why are those SMC applicants treated differently and unfairly?*
- 3. How many SMC applications are currently in process that were logged before March 2020? Please divide the number into onshore or offshore applications, if possible.*
- 4. When these pending SMC applications (logged before March 2020) will be decided? Any estimation?*
- 5. What steps have been taken to accommodate those SMC applicants who are in limbo for a very long time? How INZ is planning to avoid such a backlog in the future?*

Our Response

Questions one and two: Processing times are based on decided (approved or declined) applications and vary due to many reasons, such as how well prepared the application is, the level of verification required, including third-party checks where we don't have control of the timeframe, the volume of applications we receive, and the level of resourcing we have dedicated to this visa category.

As you may be aware, many visa categories have only recently reopened following New Zealand's border reopening. This includes the Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) with selections of Expressions of Interest (EOI) resuming on 11 November 2022.

Unfortunately, SMC processing times were significantly impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The selection of EOIs for the SMC was suspended during this period as the New Zealand borders were closed.

Reporting the current SMC processing times against decisions currently being made on applications submitted before March 2020, would be inaccurate for an applicant who has recently applied since selections of EOIs resumed in November 2022.

This is why we are unable to report SMC processing times regularly as we do with 2021 Resident Visa applications.



The INZ website currently reports processing information about SMC and Residence from Work visa applications, including the total number of unallocated skilled residence applications that are currently in the general and priority queues waiting to be allocated to a case officer, and the number of skilled residence applications allocated monthly. More information can be found here: [Skilled Migrant Category and Residence from Work processing | Immigration New Zealand](#)

INZ treats all applicants fairly on the principles of fairness and natural justice. Applications are generally allocated and processed in the order we receive them, from oldest to newest. Please refer to the link below for the relevant immigration instructions on the order of processing applications:

<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/opsmanual/#44854.htm>

Question three: As at 25 March 2023, there were 537 SMC applications on hand that were lodged before 1 March 2020, with 459 applications from offshore applicants and 78 applications from onshore applicants respectively.

Questions four and five: Whilst all pre-Covid SMC applications are all now under active assessment, some have not yet been decided for various reasons such as third-party checks, job search visa and medical deferrals or other information as required from the applicant. The processing times of these applications will depend on individual circumstances.

To ensure INZ has sufficient resources deployed to manage demand and priorities set by the Government, volume forecasting and resource modelling are conducted quarterly.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request or this response, please contact inzoias@mbie.govt.nz.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Owen', followed by a period. The signature is stylized and cursive.

Richard Owen

Acting General Manager, Border and Visa Operations
Immigration New Zealand