



28 June 2023

San

fyi-request-22946-56b702d9@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: DOIA 2223-2783

Tēnā koe San,

Thank you for your email of 29 May 2023 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

“The reason behind this request is to seek information regarding the Green List Straight to Residency visa applications that are being sent to the Special Assessment Team (SAT) or Third party verification.

I applied for my Straight to residency on 20th Jan 2023 where 90% of the application process time is within 80 days, after 80 days I asked my immigration officer whose working on my application and I got to know that it was sent to Special Assessment Team for review. I might have to wait without any time frame I have emailed and called Immigration New Zealand on multiple occasions to seek information on how long will it take to verify by a special assessment team even though it is pretty straightforward considering my travel history, education, and professional background. Waiting for how long without knowing the timeframe doesn't make any sense considering the expected percentage of residency approvals is 90% in 80 days. It is very stressful not getting any answers from the advisors or customer care team. Therefore, I would be very grateful if you could answer the following questions for me.

- 1. What information can be provided on third-party verification or SAT?*
- 2. As of today, which date's application is at the front of the queue (to be allocated to an officer in the SAT) –*
- 3. Are the applications cherry-picked when assigned to an officer in SAT, or does it go date-wise?*
- 4. Where is my application sitting in the queue?*
- 5. How long will it take for my application to be picked by SAT officer? on average how long will it take to process the application and send it back to the case officer*
- 6. can you please provide us with a contact for SAT team?*
- 7. what does SAT verify?*
- 8. How come the application submitted in March got approval after their application was sent to SAT?*
- 9. Can we ask SAT for Escalation in the process?*

The contact center does not have this information. my present visa is due to expire by the end of August. I would be grateful if I get some information regarding my application and its process time it's really stressful for waiting without any time frame.

Thanks in advance. Please feel free to contact me if you require my details once this request has been categorized.”

On 9 June 2023, the Ministry sent you a letter asking to clarify your request by specifying the application number and sending it to inzoias@mbie.govt.nz. On 19 June 2023, you confirmed the application number to us.

Our Response

Immigration New Zealand (INZ) has a visa processing team set up, known as the Specialist Assessment Team (SAT), to handle complex visa applications, and assist with verification of information where required. Where verification checks are required, once completed, the applications are sent back to the original processing office to finalise their assessment.

Questions 1 and 7. We are withholding the information under section 6(a) of the Act as making this information available would likely prejudice the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand.

We are also withholding the information under section 6(c) as making this information available would likely prejudice the maintenance of the law, including the prevention, investigation, and detection of offences, and the right to a fair trial.

Questions 2 and 4. SAT processes a variety of residence and temporary visa applications and conducts verification checks.

We were advised that your residence application was referred to SAT as a verification request and is currently awaiting a third party check. This means that the verification request associated with your application has already been actioned by SAT, and your application will be assessed further once the third party check's outcome is received.

As at 20 June 2023, the earliest verification request to SAT was dated 3 May 2022.

Questions 3, 5 and 8. Visa applications are processed in line with A16.1 Immigration General Instructions for the order of processing visa applications found here:

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

The time it takes to decide an application depends on a number of factors, including third-party checks, time taken to complete manual assessments (such as medical assessments), and in some cases, waiting for information from an applicant.

Question 6. You may contact the SAT team at INZ.SATContactMailbox@mbie.govt.nz.

Question 9. Applicants may contact the case officer or their Immigration Manager to escalate an application. Immigration Managers may use their discretion to allocate an application outside of lodgement date order depending on the applicants' circumstances.

Employer-specific applications may be processed urgently using the Employment Visa Escalation (EVE) process subject to meeting certain criteria. Please refer to the link below for more information on EVE process:

<https://www.immigration.govt.nz/new-zealand-visas/waiting-for-a-visa/employment-visa-escalation-process>

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of the Ministry's response to your request, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. Information about how to make a 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 inzoias@mbie.govt.nz.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Owen', with a large loop at the end of the line.

Richard Owen
General Manager (Acting), Border and Visa Operations
Immigration New Zealand