



10 March 2023

Ref: DOIA 2223-1660

Uma Tatikonda

fyi-request-20460-16f5fd53@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe Uma,

Thank you for your email of 30 January 2023, to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

Thank you for your response. Would you please clarify a few more questions?

- 1. According to INZ's recent statistics, on average 88 working days are required to assess a Culturally Arranged Marriage Visitor visa. You are saying an applicant should wait for 90 days for a visa that has a validity of 90 days? Whereas US-dependent partner visas take 30 days and Singapore visitor visa takes 2-3 days. No offence here, but I appreciate MBIE's comment on the reasons behind these delays.*
- 2. A visitor visa with 6 months validity requires 8-21 days of processing time. Why does a CAM visa with 3 months of validity need 3 months of processing time? Why there is a massive despondency?*
- 3. I have been advised by a senior immigration NZ staff member I can not apply for a visitor visa for my future partner. But I heard people bringing partners based on a visitor visa and converting them into other visas. My direct question is whether an applicant has a right to apply for a visitor visa if she is married to an NZ citizen for less than 90 days.*
- 4. Based on a number of normal visitor visas and CAM visitor visas, which applications are assigned to the case officer first?*
- 5. I heard that there is a manual step where someone has to enter manually after waiting on you to provide medicals to under assessment stage. My question is how many average number days are required for this process based on the last 3 months' statistics?*
- 6. Can you please release how many normal visitor visas were approved on December 22 and January 23?*
- 7. Can you please release how many CAM visitor visas were approved on December 22 and January 23?*

On 7 February 2023, we contacted you for a clarification as to, for questions six and seven if are you wanting the number of visas approved on 22 December 2022 and 23 January 2023, or are you looking for the period between December 2022 and January 2023. Further clarification from you noted below,

I would like to add the following changes to questions 6 & 7 and add further questions as below;

Changes to questions 6 & 7:

I would like to investigate approved vs received applications, which helps me to investigate if there is any

difference in priority.

6. Can you please release how many normal visitor visas were approved vs received on December 22 and January 23?

7. Can you please release how many CAM visitor visas were approved vs received on December 22 and January 23?

New Questions:

8. Can you please release how many normal visitor visas were approved vs received on December 2019 and January 2020?

9. Can you please release how many CAM visitor visas were approved vs received on December 19 and January 20?

10. The average timeline for approval of any application is tripled after opening borders. What measures did INZ take to resolve these ongoing issues?

11. The average wait time for the INZ call centre is 45-60 minutes. INZ call centres removed a call-back option for calls made from New Zealand. What is the reasoning behind this decision?

12. Does INZ take any measures to improve the average wait time of call centres?

Our Response

1. According to INZ's recent statistics, on average 88 working days are required to assess a Culturally Arranged Marriage Visitor visa. You are saying an applicant should wait for 90 days for a visa that has a validity of 90 days? Whereas US-dependent partner visas take 30 days and Singapore visitor visa takes 2-3 days. No offence here, but I appreciate MBIE's comment on the reasons behind these delays.

2. A visitor visa with 6 months validity requires 8-21 days of processing time. Why does a CAM visa with 3 months of validity need 3 months of processing time? Why there is a massive despondency?

To answer your first two questions, different visa categories have different application requirements, and this results in different processing times. The time it takes to process an application depends on a number of factors, including third-party checks, how long it takes for each processing task to be completed, whether manual assessment is needed, or whether INZ is waiting on information from an applicant. As a result, the order in which applications are accepted for processing does not determine the order that they are decided.

3. I have been advised by a senior immigration NZ staff member I cannot apply for a visitor visa for my future partner. But I heard people bringing partners based on a visitor visa and converting them into other visas. My direct question is whether an applicant has a right to apply for a visitor visa if she is married to an NZ citizen for less than 90 days.

Applicants should apply for the visa that best fits their intended purpose of travel. If an applicant meets the requirements under the category they have applied under, they will normally be granted a visa. For further information regarding partnership based visa processing please check the Immigration New Zealand (INZ) website in the link below: <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/new-zealand-visas/preparing-a-visa-application/support-family/how-family-is-defined/partnership>

4. Based on n number of normal visitor visas and CAM visitor visas, which applications are assigned to the case officer first?

Applications of the same group will generally be processed in lodgement date order. Both Visitor Visa and CAM Visitor Visa applications are generally allocated in order of the date they are lodged. Processing timeliness of applications will vary based on a number of factors, including system capacity, application volumes, and the complexity of the application.

Under section 26(4) of the Immigration Act 2009, the chief executive may give general instructions to immigration officers on the order and manner of processing any application, or specified classes of application. If such general instructions are given, an immigration officer must process an application in accordance with those instructions. For further information regarding the order and manner of processing please follow the link, <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/opsmanual/#44854.htm>

5. I heard that there is a manual step where someone has to enter manually after Waiting on you to provide medicals to under assessment stage. My question is how many average number days are required for this process based on the last 3 months' statistics?

We are refusing this part of your request under section 18(f) of the Act as INZ would be required to manually check each application to find the date that the status of the application was changed.

In accordance with section 18A of the OIA, I have considered whether fixing a charge under section 15 or extending the time limit under section 15A would enable your request to be granted, but it is my view that neither would do so.

In accordance with section 18B of the OIA, I have also considered whether consulting with you would assist you to make the request in a form that would remove the reason for the refusal, but in my view it would not.

6. Can you please release how many normal visitor visas were approved vs received on December 22 and January 23?

There were 34,972 visitor visa general applications received between 1 December 2022 and 31 January 2023 and 35,638 visitor visa general applications were approved between 1 December 2022 and 31 January 2023.

7. Can you please release how many CAM visitor visas were approved vs received on December 22 and January 23?

There were 163 CAM visitor visa applications received between 1 December 2022 and 31 January 2023. and 50 Culturally Arranged Marriage (CAM) visitor visa applications were approved between 1 December 2022 and 31 January 2023.

8. Can you please release how many normal visitor visas were approved vs received on December 2019 and January 2020?

There were 60,345 visitor visa general applications received between 1 December 2019 and 31 January 2020 and 59,481 visitor visa general applications were approved between 1 December 2019 and 31 January 2020.

9. Can you please release how many CAM visitor visas were approved vs received on December 19 and January 20?

There were 65 CAM visitor visa applications received between 1 December 2019 and 31 January 2020 and two CAM visitor visa applications were approved between 1 December 2019 and 31 January 2020, and

10. The average timeline for approval of any application is tripled after opening borders. What measures did INZ take to resolve these ongoing issues?

INZ continues to see high volumes of temporary visa applications since borders were fully opened. INZ continues to build capability in the system through its people and technology. INZ is working hard to process applications as quickly as possible.

INZ has a dedicated team looking at ways visa processing can be accelerated to get through the initial surge of applications received and ensure we can deliver a positive customer experience.

INZ is transitioning visitor visa applications onto the enhanced Immigration Online system. This new system is already providing improved efficiencies by streamlining visa processing. Adjustments to settings are also being implemented to support more efficient processing and any additional staff have been temporarily redirected to address the high visitor visa application volumes.

11. The average wait time for the INZ call centre is 45-60 minutes. INZ call centres removed a call-back option for calls made from New Zealand. What is the reasoning behind this decision?

The average wait time at the Immigration Contact Centre has decreased from 90 minutes in November 2022 to 30 minutes in December 2022 across all of its lines. The call back option has not been turned off, and call backs are offered from 8am-9am and 11am-12pm through immigration voice recording Monday to Friday.

12. Does INZ take any measures to improve the average wait time of call centres?

To meet the current high call volume demand, additional staff have been recruited into the Immigration Contact Centre, which has significantly improved service in recent weeks. Opening hours have been extended from 8am-10pm to 6am-10pm Monday to Friday, to better meet demand.

Callers are encouraged to check the INZ website (www.immigration.govt.nz) in the first instance to see if they can find an answer to their query.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request or this response, or if you require any further assistance, please contact OIA@mbie.govt.nz.

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 freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Michael Carley
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Immigration New Zealand
Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment