



Liu

fyi-request-18191-4b769fd0@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: DOIA 2122-1407

Dear Liu,

Thank you for your email of 14 January 2022 requesting under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

"1- INZ has started the processing of offshore resident visa applications. Can you share the unallocated submitted offshore and onshore resident visa applications to date? Please break down the list into general queue (onshore and offshore), priority queue (onshore and offshore) and month or week when applications were submitted?"

2- What is the criteria of processing onshore SMC visa applications? When the applications will be processed for those who are onshore but not eligible for one-off residency? Majority of them are already waiting from last two years and so. What steps INZ is taking to accommodate such applicants?"

3- If INZ has started the processing of offshore applications and currently giving priority to one off residency visa applications, then how INZ is allocating resources? Please be specific, how many staff members are processing one off and other resident visa applications? Is the allocation fair? What were the criterion used to make such allocation?"

4- Why INZ hasn't increased its capacity before starting the offshore visa applications? If court ruled out this decision then it was solely INZ responsibility to increase its capacity to process the applications. Why INZ is switching from one queue to other while making some of SMC visa applicants ineligible of one-off resident visa by applying the rule of eligible visa on 29 September 2021?"

5- INZ is starting the applications as per submission date and/or priority queue. Then why INZ is focusing more on this new one-off resident visa applications while INZ just started this one off resident visa recently? Why INZ is ignoring those who have already submitted their SMC applications and waiting for an allocation from last 2 years and so. INZ is conflicting with its own stance and it is highly unfair with those who are not eligible for this one-off resident visa. INZ pushed them back by introducing new policies and changing its stance.

6- Why INZ is constantly changing its policies and stance without considering their impact on lives of many migrants? Is INZ applying term called "collateral damage"?"

Our Response

1. INZ has started the processing of offshore resident visa applications. Can you share the unallocated submitted offshore and onshore resident visa applications to date? Please break down the list into general queue (onshore and offshore), priority queue (onshore and offshore) and month or week when applications were submitted?

In response to this question, please refer to Table 1 attached as an appendix to this letter.

2. What is the criteria of processing onshore SMC visa applications? When the applications will be processed for those who are onshore but not eligible for one-off residency? Majority of them are already waiting from last two years and so. What steps INZ is taking to accommodate such applicants?

3. If INZ has started the processing of offshore applications and currently giving priority to one off residency visa applications, then how INZ is allocating resources? Please be specific, how many staff members are processing one off and other resident visa applications? Is the allocation fair? What were the criterion used to make such allocation?

With the opening of the 2021 Resident Visa, most of Immigration New Zealand's staff who were processing Skilled Migrant (SMC) and Residence from Work (RFW) category applications are now processing 2021 Resident Visa applications. This reflects the recent change to the order in which residence category visa applications are processed. While we will retain a dedicated team of Immigration Officers processing Skilled Migrant and Residence from Work category, processing applications for the 2021 Resident Visa is a priority for Immigration New Zealand.

I can confirm that processing is continuing for applications in the skilled residence queue where the applicant has not applied for the 2021 Resident Visa. Many people in this queue have applied for the 2021 Resident Visa, which has significantly reduced the number of applications to process and will have a positive impact on allocation times for the applications remaining.

As of 10 February 2022, there are 10 Immigration Officers processing skilled residence applications. Visa applications will continue to be processed in accordance with A16.1 General Instructions as to the order of processing visa applications. More information on this can be found here: [Operational Manual - Immigration New Zealand. Issue Date: 2 February 2022](#)[Operational Manual - Immigration New Zealand. Issue Date: 22 August 2016](#)

4. Why INZ hasn't increased its capacity before starting the offshore visa applications? If court ruled out this decision then it was solely INZ responsibility to increase its capacity to process the applications. Why INZ is switching from one queue to other while making some of SMC visa applicants ineligible of one-off resident visa by applying the rule of eligible visa on 29 September 2021?

5. INZ is starting the applications as per submission date and/or priority queue. Then why INZ is focusing more on this new one-off resident visa applications while INZ just started this one off resident visa recently? Why INZ is ignoring those who have already submitted their SMC applications and waiting for an allocation from last 2 years and so. INZ is conflicting with its own stance and it is highly unfair with those who are not eligible for this one-off resident visa. INZ pushed them back by introducing new policies and changing its stance.

Immigration New Zealand continues to build our capacity and capability across the visa processing network to ensure we can deliver timely visa decisions for applicants across all visa categories. Immigration New Zealand is also currently expanding its office space in New Zealand and recruiting to grow the size of its workforce to meet the expected increase in visa volumes.

The Government has introduced a one-off residence pathway – the 2021 Resident Visa – to provide an estimated 165,000 migrants currently in New Zealand with residence. The one-off residence pathway will allow employers to retain settled, skilled and scarce migrant workers, reflecting their critical part in New Zealand's economy, and also gives migrant workers who have already demonstrated their commitment to New Zealand the certainty to make a life here.

The 2021 Resident Visa will be simple for applicants to apply for and will be an online application form which will make it faster and easier for applicants to complete and submit. As the applications will be submitted online, they will still be able to be processed where there are disruptions to access to our offices.

INZ are currently recruiting for more staff to ensure there is the right level of resource to process additional visa volumes that are expected across the immigration system.

Processing the new 2021 Resident Visa applications is a priority for INZ and are committed to deciding the vast majority of these applications within 12 months, with some being much faster.

The 2021 Resident Visa is more streamlined than a skilled residence application and as a result, we are processing these applications more quickly. You can view the current timeframes [here](#) and eligibility criteria [here](#).

The processing is continuing for applications in the skilled residence queue where the applicant has not applied for the 2021 Resident Visa. Many people in this queue have applied for the 2021 Resident Visa, which has significantly reduced the number of applications to process and will have a positive impact on allocation times for the applications remaining.

6. Why INZ is constantly changing its policies and stance without considering their impact on lives of many migrants? Is INZ applying term called "collateral damage"?"

The decisions about eligibility were made by the Government through a decision at Cabinet. You can see the Cabinet paper where the options about eligibility are explained on the MBIE website:

[One-off residence pathway for onshore migrant workers \(mbie.govt.nz\)](https://www.mbie.govt.nz/one-off-residence-pathway-for-onshore-migrant-workers)

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.

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

Yours sincerely,



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

Table 1. The total number of skilled residence applications on hand as of 3 February 2022 broken down by Onshore/Offshore, Priority/Non-Priority queues and by month the applications were accepted for processing by Immigration New Zealand. Note that figures equal to or less than five have been withheld under section 9(2)(a) to protect an individual’s privacy.

Month Accepted	Offshore Non Priority applications	Onshore Non Priority applications	Priority applications
Dec-18	37	0	0
Jan-19	59	<=5	0
Feb-19	46	0	0
Mar-19	47	<=5	0
Apr-19	78	0	0
May-19	72	<=5	0
Jun-19	71	0	0
Jul-19	66	<=5	0
Aug-19	75	<=5	0
Sep-19	58	0	0
Oct-19	83	0	0
Nov-19	79	327	<=5
Dec-19	81	418	<=5
Jan-20	90	341	7
Feb-20	82	436	11
Mar-20	86	676	19
Apr-20	27	84	0
May-20	59	424	6
Jun-20	59	341	<=5
Jul-20	32	407	8
Aug-20	42	325	7
Sep-20	20	245	<=5
Oct-20	25	257	<=5
Nov-20	29	278	8
Dec-20	24	240	<=5
Jan-21	8	135	6
Feb-21	<=5	171	7
Mar-21	<=5	221	11
Apr-21	<=5	216	11
May-21	<=5	272	11
Jun-21	<=5	281	14
Jul-21	<=5	281	17
Aug-21	0	233	63
Sep-21	<=5	269	95
Oct-21	0	644	228
Nov-21	0	552	207
Dec-21	0	93	119
Jan-22	0	14	73
Feb-22	0	<=5	0
Total	1,449	8,188	954

