

Visa Processing Update

Visitor Visas
Initial application numbers are higher than forecast. The top two nationalities INZ are receiving the highest volumes of applications from are India and South Africa, with people from China also applying in higher-than-expected numbers. We are monitoring the number of incoming applications to determine if we need to adjust our plans and utilise the levers at our disposal to ensure efficient processing. This includes surging in more processing staff or adjusting the settings. Due to the surge, we are unlikely to process all applications within 20 working days but are confident this will occur when we are through the initial surge. Our processing staff are steadily growing in confidence with processing visitor visa applications in the new enhanced Immigration Online system. No unexpected issues have arisen with this new system and applications appear to be flowing through the automated steps as expected. There is pressure on Identity Services as they are experiencing a surge of identities for manual resolution. More about this is outlined below, but it is having an impact on the steady flow of applications through to Immigration Officers. There are also a significant number of third-country nationals applying from countries such as Australia. INZ are receiving a number of visitor visa applications from visa waiver applicants. A number of these are for legitimate reasons, including having character issues that make them ineligible to apply for a New Zealand Electronic Travel Authority (NZETA) or they intend to stay for longer than permitted under visa waiver. There are also a number who appear to have incorrectly lodged visitor visa applications when they are eligible for visa waiver. Extensive communications have occurred about NZETA but we will relook at this considering this development.

Student Visas
Most applications lodged in IGMS post 1 August 2022 are still working their way through lodgement in the National Documentation Office which is also experiencing an initial surge of work with the borders reopening. A significant proportion received (circa 39 percent) of applications that have been received have been from China, whereas such demand from the India market (circa 12 percent) is yet to be seen. Palmerston North office are assisting with lodgements, with four Immigration Officers completing this to help ensure work is moving through the system. The Palmerston North and Henderson offices are largely allocating applications within a working day of them arriving at the office. The Palmerston North office are also clearing as much on hand work as possible and continuing preparation for the incoming volume. Well over 90 per cent of Cohort 4 have been decided.

Phasing out border exceptions
Inflows of employer expressions of interest (EOI) have reduced significantly - 30 EOIs were received last week. On hand critical purpose visitor visa (CPVV) applications are starting to increase and timeframes for allocation have grown slightly. As noted last week, as there is no overlap between border exceptions and visitor visas (and the EOI/ITA process generates a lag in application inflows from initial ITAs), there is now quite a bit of pressure on CPVV application processing and timeliness in the short term. Processing has now started on the September/October Deep Sea Fisher cohort. This consists of approximately 500 applications, but these are generally lengthier and more complex to process due to the risk level and additional processes required (national security checks etc.).

Work Visas
Slow progress is being made on the remaining Essential Skills applications due to the complexity of the remaining applications. Volumes continue to grow in the Specific Purpose category due to limited staff being allocated to process this application type as priority is elsewhere. Further decisions on workforce allocation are being progressed urgently to ensure sufficient allocation is in place and these can be cleared as soon as possible.

Working Holiday Scheme (WHS)
The current caseload average for the team is 151 applications per officer. Of the applications on hand, approximately 87 percent are currently allocated to staff for processing. The Croatia capped scheme (100 places) opens on 10 August 2022 followed by the Peru capped scheme (100 places) on 11 August 2022.

Identity Services
Identity volumes have continued to significantly increase since the border was fully opened on 1 August 2022, with greater than double the volume of tasks received in comparison to what was generally received in the weeks prior. There are currently competing demands to process tasks, but priority is being given to visitor visa, job check, accredited employer, work visa and NZETA. Additional options to reduce the risk of tasks being delayed are being explored and changes to the business rules will be actioned over the next couple of weeks by ICT, reducing the level of manual resolutions required.

Risk and Verification
The initial market risk training for processing offices concluded on 2 August 2022. National security or defence, Maintenance of the law. The Offshore Risk Monitoring and Review report for visa decisions made in June 2022 will be finalised this week. The report indicates that immigration risk is largely being managed effectively, with ongoing opportunities identified to continually refine risk advice and treatment options. This includes an updated plan for the six different training sessions which will be run each fortnight. These involve discussion of offshore visa immigration risk from a different offshore market. Onshore offices will have a chance to review applications prior to the meeting so they can be discussed on the call.

Border Update

Border Operations is now managing a fully opened border and remains alert for developing trends. Border staff continue to monitor and provide advice on the maritime border settings with particular emphasis on NZETA education and New Zealand Traveller Declaration. The first cruise ship to return will be the Pacific Explorer which is set to arrive on the 12 August 2022 with approximately 1,160 passengers. New Zealand Airline Liaison Officers provided advice and support to the carrier in Sydney prior to the departure of the Pacific Explorer on Monday.

Numbers at a Glance

Visa Applications	Total			
	Accepted	On Hand	Declined	Approved
13 March (Step 2)				
WHSV (Special direction)	18,055	0	0	18,054
WHS visas	22,220	1,582	503	20,114
12 April (Step 3a)				
5,000 Students	4,827	246	731	3,628
4 July (Step 4)				
Work Visas	8,339	4,533	55	3,583
31 July (Step 5)				
Student Visas	2,887	2,738	4	141
Visitor Visas	10,512		16	696

Border Operations - Arrivals	
	Total*
13 March (Step 2)	
WHS visas incl (Special direction)	3,681
12 April (Step 3a)	
5,000 Students	2,796
Australian Citizens and Residents	189,150
Existing Student Visa Holders	4,113
Existing Work Visa Holders	15,248
1 May (Step 3b)	
Existing Business Visitor Holders	219
Existing Visitor Visa Holders	10,451
Visitor Visa Waiver	61,131
4 July (Step 4)	
Work Visas	417
31 July (Step 5)	
Student Visas	2
Visitor Visas	52
Total Arrivals	944,596

Time to Complete (Calendar Days)							
Reporting Category	Average Time to Complete (Median)	Minimum Time to Complete	25th Percentile (25% completed within)	50th Percentile (50% completed within)	75th Percentile (75% completed within)	90th Percentile (90% completed within)	Maximum Time to Complete
WHS Visas	9	0	4	9	20	34	138
5,000 Students	27	0	18	27	42	54	94
Work Visas	7	0	0	7	17	21	155
Student Visas	0	0	0	0	4	7	21

Issues management

Higher than expected applications for visitor visas
Following the reopening of visitor visas, we have seen a higher than anticipated surge of applications. It is still too early to determine whether this will continue and require implementation of our contingency options. Regardless, automation decisions are being progressed sooner than originally planned, and resource allocation options are being developed.

Engagement

Stakeholder emails are being drafted to go out to Pacific Island stakeholders this week, reiterating the Pacific Visitor Visa application process, and that applications will need to continue to be submitted online. The INZ website has now been updated following the border reopening. Further communications about visa waiver country eligibility are being considered.

Processing update and Numbers at a Glance

Employer Accreditation

As at 9 August 2022, 8,818 accreditation applications have been received and of these 7,917 applications have been completed. Of the approved applications, 6381 (80.6 percent) have been completed within ten working days.

Accreditation Applications	Received	Completed
Standard	6221	5,533
High Volume	2,290	2,158
Franchise	203	147
Triangular	102	78
Unclassified	1	1
Total	8,818	7,917

Percentage of Applications Completed by number of days

Accreditation Type	0-10 Days	11-20 Days	21-30 Days	31-40 Days	41-50 Days	51+ Days	Number Completed
Standard	81.73%	11.02%	3.94%	2.96%	0.29%	0.05%	5,533
High Volume	79.10%	12.00%	5.10%	2.97%	0.74%	0.09%	2,158
Franchisee	80.95%	11.56%	6.12%	1.36%	.	.	147
Triangular	42.31%	41.03%	8.97%	5.13%	2.56%	.	78

The numbers are accurate as at **approximately 10pm 9 August 2022**

Job Check

As of 9 August 2022, 4,463 Job Check applications have been received and of these 1,936 applications have been completed. Of the approved applications, 614 (34.85 percent) have been completed within ten working days.

The processing team have been working to streamline the processes following the guidance on the manner of processing issued by the Deputy Chief Executive.

INZ continues to see job check applications where Information is not being provided up front and job advertisement not meeting INZ requirements. This is causing some delay in applications progressing through to approval. INZ is taking a facilitative approach and working with employers to educate them on what is required.

Job check	Number	Positions
Applications Received	4,463	30,471
Approved	1,934	14,262
Declined	1	10

External Status	0-10 Days	11-20 Days	21-30 Days	31-41 Days	Number Completed
Approved	34.85%	51.29%	11.01%	2.84%	1,934
Declined	.	100.00%	.	.	1
Withdrawn	.	.	100.00%	.	2

Migrant Work Visa

Assessment of Work Visa applications continue to be processed via a hybrid model between ADEPT or in AMS until the further deployment of ADEPT back-end functionality scheduled for 28 August.

Some applications are not progressing until passports have been sighted. It is important migrants meet policy requirements however INZ is considering whether applications can progress while waiting for passports to be submitted following Visa Application Centre (VAC) review.

Work Visa	Number
Applications Received	792
Approved	24
Declined	0

Engagement

Immigration Contact Centre

To support the AEWV work the Immigration Contact Centre (ICC) has implemented/tested three options for employers to become informed about employer accreditation, the job check and the accredited employer workvisa. These are:

A priority employer line, which was launched 20 June 2022, which on average receives 400-500 calls a week.

- A new 'request a call' function which has received 329 requests since its implementation on 30 May 2022.
- An outbound calling pilot targeting 250 employers who had not been accredited in the past but had been linked to hiring migrants on other visa types in the last 5 years, concluded on Friday 8 July.

A formal review of all three initiatives is in progress and due for completion in August.

Information and Education

To support the need to drive increased awareness of AEWV with employers, an extended communications plan has been developed. The AEWV Extended Communications Plan will extend our marketing and communications activity through to the end of September. The focus of this plan is to leverage third-party channels to push out AEWV messaging to groups and audiences we may not have engaged with in previous rounds of communications. The plan also includes an extension of existing activity to audiences we have engaged with previously. In this report period, the following activity has occurred;

- An options paper has been developed with three marketing campaign extension options, each due to begin 19 August
- Another round of stakeholder emails were sent to Employers, Immigration professionals, and Migrant communities in INZ's database to reflect the current status of AEWV (open and processing), and provide proactive guidance to support successful job check applications
- AEWV was featured in the Live and Work New Zealand brand launch, including an email to our Skilled Migrant database of 1.5m
- A review of all AEWV assets has begun, and is scheduled for conclusion 19 August, with the aim of ensuring all asset reflect the current status of AEWV (open and processing), and proactive guidance to support successful job check applications is included where appropriate.

Issues management

As we work our way through assessing Job Check applications, we have identified some omissions and errors by customers in their applications, which is impacting our ability to process these applications within the 10-day timeframe.

Based on an initial sample of the Job Check applications that have required further information, 75% of issues identified with Job Check applications are related to the submitted employment agreements. This is predominately regarding missing information regarding the hours of work and a detailed description of the work to be performed. We are also seeing some job check applications where the job advertisements do not meet immigration requirements due to the advertisement not running for 14 days or the salary range of the role is not included in the advertisement.

To help smooth the transition to the new AEWV policy for everyone, INZ will initially be taking a facilitative approach to processing Job Check applications. We will initially be focusing on educating employers about requirements rather than declining their applications in the first instance. We are taking a pragmatic approach to missing information where possible, including calling employers to help speed up the process and get the information quickly.

2021 Resident Visa Operational Performance Dashboard (as at 5pm Sunday 7 August 2022)

Visa Processing Update

The 2021 Resident Visa category closed for new applications on 31 July 2022.

For the week of 1 August there were 787 decisions made against a forecast of 2,110 and there are currently 61,000 applications awaiting decisions.

Following changes in the phased border reopening dates, INZ has had to pivot resources to cover initial surges in visa applications from other visa categories. This has reduced the number of FTE focused purely on 2021 Resident Visa processing to approximately 100 Immigration Officers. In addition, a temporary slowdown in available tasks for Immigration Officers to pull as resulted in a slower decision rate in the past week.

We remain 14,778 decisions ahead of our cumulative forecast, and continue to monitor progress against the 18-month plan. Any changes to dedicated FTE will not impact stated intentions that 80 per cent of applications are expected to be processed by approximately March 2023 (forecasted November 2022 before) and 100 per cent by approximately May 2023 (forecasted January 2023 before). We will continue to reassess how our resources are allocated depending on actual volumes of people that apply for visas as part of the border reopening.

Numbers at a Glance

Totals for 2021 RV	
Applications received	106,029*
People included	214,449*
Applications Approved cumulative	43,781
People Approved cumulative	83,688
Applications Declined Failed Instructions	89

*Includes applications received during the closure of 2021 RV category. INZ will contact these applicants to advise to self- withdraw.

- On-hand Residence from Work (RfW) applications have reduced by 93% since 1 December 2021 and 80% for Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) applications.
- Approximately 96% (106,029*) of applications expected (110,000) for 2021 RV have been received.

*includes applications received during the closure of 2021 RV category. INZ will contact these applicants to advise to self- withdraw.

Issues management

- INZ is continuing to work to identify applicants who have obtained medicals prior to INZ requesting these as this means we have medicals in the system that are not associated with an ADEPT application. This involves data matching to ensure the correct medical is associated with the correct application once identity processing has been completed. It appears approximately 1,000 applicants have been impacted by this issue, work is on-going to obtain their contact details to being to arrange refunds and a review of comms and engagement in relation to this work is underway.
- A number of defects continue to be worked on and remediated as part of early life support.

Engagement

An Immigration New Zealand media release on the closure/final numbers of applications, people, jobs is planned for this week pending approval of statistics. The media release will be supported by social media posts. A refreshed communications plan is also being prepared.

	18 month plan																			
Week beginning	16-May-22	23-May-22	30-May-22	06-Jun-22	13-Jun-22	20-Jun-22	27-Jun-22	04-Jul-22	11-Jul-22	18-Jul-22	25-Jul-22	01-Aug-22	08-Aug-22	15-Aug-22	22-Aug-22	29-Aug-22	05-Sep-22	12-Sep-22	19-Sep-22	26-Sep-22
Week ending Sunday	22-May-22	29-May-22	05-Jun-22	12-Jun-22	19-Jun-22	26-Jun-22	03-Jul-22	10-Jul-22	17-Jul-22	24-Jul-22	31-Jul-22	07-Aug-22	14-Aug-22	21-Aug-22	28-Aug-22	04-Sep-22	11-Sep-22	18-Sep-22	25-Sep-22	02-Oct-22
Decisions Forecast	1,070	1,161	554	646	951	1,001	1,473	1,687	1,897	2,110	2,110	2,110	2,111	2,111	2,011	1,829	1,829	1,830	1,830	1,830
Decisions Actual	484	455	1,397	1,170	1,971	1,979	2,875	3,087	2,220	2,972	2,505	787								
Variance weekly	-586	-706	843	524	1,020	978	1,402	1,400	323	862	395	-1,323								
Decisions Forecast cumulative	13,302	14,463	15,017	15,663	16,614	17,616	19,089	20,776	22,673	24,783	26,893	29,003	31,115	33,226	35,237	37,066	38,896	40,726	42,556	44,387
Decisions Actual cumulative	22,363	22,818	24,215	25,385	27,356	29,335	32,210	35,297	37,517	40,489	42,994	43,781								
Variance cumulative	9,061	8,355	9,198	9,722	10,742	11,719	13,121	14,521	14,844	15,706	16,101	14,778								