



29 April 2021

45 Pipitea Street, Wellington 6011

Phone +64 4 495 7200

dia.govt.nz

Kay

fyi-request-14576-

7e0339e2@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Kay

Official Information Act 1982 request 2021-0554 – Citizenship application timeframes

Thank you for your Official Information Act (Act) request received by the Department of Internal Affairs (Department) on 27 March 2021.

You requested –

Please tell me if you are marking applications to be allocated to case officer?

In your email request you also raised concerns regarding the information provided to you by the Department's Contact Centre. In response to your request, and those concerns, I can provide you with the following information.

It is important to reiterate the Department's response provided to you for OIA 2021-0453; that the citizenship application processing timeframes you have referred to are indicative only. There is no set standard processing timeframe for citizenship application because every application is different. For that reason, there is no 'normal' timeframe.

The processing timeframe covers the entire application process, which starts when an applicant submits their application. Once an application is received it then waits to be allocated to a case officer, and these 'waiting to be allocated' applications are processed in order of when the payment was received.

When the application is allocated to a case officer, it then undergoes an assessment, validation and a decision on the outcome is made. Most applicants will be advised of the outcome from their application within 7 to 12 months of submitting a correct and complete application.

After an application has been approved, it normally takes between 2 to 5 months for an applicant to be allocated to a ceremony in their area of residence. This wait time is dependent on where the applicant lives and the schedule of their local council.

Only when an applicant receives their Citizenship certificate (or confirmation that their application has not been approved) is the process complete. This additional wait time of the ceremony and arrival of their Citizenship certificate can bring the entire timeframe for the process up to 17 months, which is what was indicated to you by the Contact Centre.

I have looked further into the concerns raised in your request OIA 2021-0453, regarding potential discrepancies in processing timeframes for citizenship applications. I have identified that the application type can have a significant impact on the length of time it may take to process that application. This is because applications that are not standard applications can be processed faster, i.e. an application where a person who is already a Citizen by Descent is upgrading to Citizenship by Grant.

Re-apply applications are another example of this. These are applications where the applicant has applied before but withdrew their application, i.e. they did not meet presence requirements. Because certain parts of the application do not need to be processed again, this can significantly reduce the processing time of the re-apply application.

It is important to note that the Department uses a randomised model of allocating applications to case officers. Each case officer follows a standardised policy to process applications which ensures that each application is managed appropriately and fairly.

The Department is committed to providing all of its customers with accurate and consistent information regarding the services they access, and if you have any remaining concerns regarding the service you have received I encourage you to contact the Official Correspondence team directly at sdoofficialcorrespondence@dia.govt.nz. If you provide them with your full name and contact details, they can assist you further.

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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicola Potter', written in a cursive style.

Nicola Potter
Manager Operational Policy and Official Correspondence
Service Delivery and Operations