



18 May 2021

45 Pipitea Street, Wellington 6011

Phone +64 4 495 7200

S Rasool

fyi-request-15205-

abe45c5b@requests.fyi.org.nz

dia.govt.nz

Dear S Rasool

Official Information Act 1982 request 2021-0590 – Citizenship timeframes

Thank you for your Official Information Act (Act) request received by the Department of Internal Affairs (Department) on 18 April 2021.

You requested –

- 1. Number of case officers working on Citizenship application for each month for the years 2019, 2020 & 2021*
- 2. Number of case officers off being paid for processing no applications of Citizenship for each week of Level 4, Level 3 and Level 2 lockdowns due to Covid-19.*
- 3. Queue of applications same as data provided by Immigration New Zealand (<https://fyi.org.nz/request/14983/response/55571/attach/html/3/INZ%20Response%20DOIA%202021%201657.pdf.html>). I highly doubt the response provided by DIA last week i.e. DIA doesn't have tracked data or maintains any statistics for the processing of Citizenship application date wise or hold a record about which week's/month's applications are being processed right now. It would be joke if such data is not available and not getting tracked by DIA.*
- 4. Please provide numbers of Citizenship applications received by DIA for each month during 2019, 2020 & 2021 and the number of applications processed within each month as well.*
- 5. Please release all communications issued to Case Officers by Minister for DIA & the superiors of Case Officers between March 2020 till date, relating to Citizenship applications, as well as backlog concerns raised by Case Officers to Minister & their Superiors.*

Questions 1 and 4

In response to these parts of your request, please refer to Appendix A, attached. Tables one and two provide you with a breakdown of Full Time Employees (FTEs) trained in Citizenship by Grant for the 2019 calendar year to date, and the Number of Citizenship by grant applications received and processed each month from January 2019 to 30 April 2021, respectively.

Question 2

I can advise that there were 39 employees in the Citizenship Case Officer role between 14 March 2020 and 26 February 2021. Our records indicate there were 33.5 days of paid special leave during this period, however we are unable to breakdown this information to reflect differing levels of lockdown as requested.

It is important to explain that the Department followed Ministry of Health COVID-19 guidelines including physical distancing in the office, which limited the number of staff who could physically be present in our workplace. Citizenship processing continued to occur during lockdown, but unlike birth or death registration it was not deemed an essential service, and it was not possible for full productivity to be maintained. This is because some key systems were not able to be accessed offsite due to privacy and security reasons, which meant working from was not a feasible option for some of our staff.

We have provided the above timeframe ending in 26 February 2021, as this was when the Department's Service Delivery and Operations branch, which processes citizenship applications, moved away from siloed teams and roles that only process one type of application. This is a strategic move towards having staff cross skilled across a variety of tasks to be able to flex and move with the demands of the business and better meet the needs of our customer.

Question 3

As of 11 May 2021, the majority of Citizenship by grant applications currently being worked on were received by DIA during the months of July and August 2020. September applications will begin being processed accordingly.

Question 5

Firstly, I must advise that I have interpreted 'communications issued' and 'concerns raised' to include all emails, conversations, meetings, Department intranet announcements, and the like.

It is important for me to explain that the Minister of Internal Affairs is not involved in operational matters such as the processing of citizenship applications. Because of this, there are no communications from the Minister to Citizenship Case Officers, or vice versa. In addition to this, while there are regular communications between both frontline processing staff and their superiors, this communication typically focusses on the day to day aspects of their work.

Preliminary scoping for this part of your request established that there were hundreds of emails for one processing team alone. Because of this, we anticipate that your request as it stands covers thousands of emails in addition to other types of communications that were deemed in scope, due to its broad nature.

Therefore, I must refuse this part of your request under section 18(f) of the Act; that the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

Should you wish to narrow the scope of this part of your request, to communications of a certain type and specific content, you can do so, and the Department can consider this under a new request.

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 blue ink, appearing to be 'JT', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Julia Taylor
Manager Operational Policy and Official Correspondence
Service Delivery and Operations