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Tēnā koe Rakesh

Official Information Act 1982 request 2021-0273 – citizenship processing timeframes

Thank you for your Official Information Act (Act) request received by the Department of Internal Affairs (Department) on 30 September 2021.

You requested, in relation to citizenship processing timeframes –

- 1. Why I have not got any communication even about allocation of a case officer for my case submitted on 11.2.21?*
- 2. Which month you are processing at present?*
- 3. How long I have to wait?*

In response to your request I can provide you with the following information.

Question one

Once an application has been received, it waits in a queue to be allocated to a citizenship trained Life and Identity Services Officer (LISO). Only once an application has been allocated to a LISO, will the applicant receive further communication from the Department. If you are yet to receive communication from the Department about your application, this indicates that it has not yet been allocated for processing.

It currently takes between 10 and 11 months for applications to be allocated to a LISO for processing, however, there is no set standard processing timeframe for citizenship applications because every application is different. For that reason, there is no 'normal' timeframe.

It may be helpful for me to explain that the processing timeframe covers the entire application process, which starts when an applicant submits their application. The application then undergoes an assessment, a recommendation, review of the assessment and recommendation, and a decision on the outcome is made. Only when an applicant receives their Citizenship certificate (or confirmation that their application has not been approved) is the process complete. In most cases, an applicant must attend a ceremony to receive their certificate.

Questions two and three

I am unable to give you an estimate on when your application will be assigned to a LISO for assessment, as timeframes can change as time goes on. However, I can advise that as at 27 October 2021, the oldest unassigned paper application was received on 10 November 2020. The oldest unassigned online application was received on 20 December 2020. I can also confirm that timeframes for processing citizenship by grant applications are regularly updated at [Application timeframes | New Zealand Government \(www.govt.nz\)](https://www.govt.nz/application-timeframes).

I understand from your request that there may have been some confusion around processing timeframes because of the recent Radio New Zealand Article regarding citizenship processing delays. It is important for me to explain that the applications referred to that have been approved this year, were received by the Department in 2020.

Should you wish to gain further insight into the current processing timeframes, you can find a number of proactively released Official Information Act responses regarding these timeframes on the Department's website here: <https://www.dia.govt.nz/Official-Information-Act-Requests-2>.

Further comments

I would also like to acknowledge your frustration surrounding the current citizenship processing times and would like to reassure you the Department has initiatives underway to reduce the citizenship application backlog, speed up processing, and improve general customer experience.

In the immediate term this includes hiring additional temporary staff who will focus on reducing the backlog of paper applications, freeing up most existing staff to work exclusively on online applications.

We expect that the time taken for staff to process in the online system should reduce as they become more familiar with our new system. We are also continuing to develop this new system and train more existing staff to process citizenship applications. Together, this range of initiatives should see a significant decrease in the backlog in coming months.

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.

Ngā mihi



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Service Delivery and Operations