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Tēnā koe Mohamed

OIA request 21/22 0690 Request for information relating to citizenship processing timeframes

Thank you for your Official Information Act (Act) request received by the Department of Internal Affairs (Department) on 6 April 2022.

You requested –

information requests on the same topics are quite a hot topic for a large group of people in NZ while the long chain of back long promised to be eased in Mid of 2022 I could see as per that latest update on the 4th of April that there are further delays to the processing time for Citizenship applications.

1. *Could you please explain the reason for the further delay of the additional month added in April 2022? as per the below page*

<https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.govt.nz%2Fbrowse%2Fpassports-citizenship-and-identity%2Fnz-citizenship%2Fhow-to-apply-for-nz-citizenship%2Fapplication-timeframes%2F&data=04%7C01%7CAlysha.Stevenson%40dia.govt.nz%7C3cb7e317d1714ab88db408da18ef1774%7Cf659ca5cfc474e96b24d14c95df13acb%7C0%7C637849712408492655%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ikl1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sd=kwcnV4h8POJM3ydytYlXZMpdOqmkHsmSlvwycDY6c%2FU4%3D&reserved=0>

It seems the plan for the improvement is not going to the right direction where we are now closer to Mid 2022.

2. *Could you please explain your plan and proposal to solve the situation?*

3. *to prove the effectiveness of the new system could you please mention the following in a tabular form*

- *Average number of applications processed by case officers per month from Jan 2019 till March 2022*
- *Number of case officers working on citizenship applications during that above period*
- *Expected number of applications processed from April 2022 till December 2022 to show that improvement in numbers*

In response to your request I can provide you with the following information, which has been broken down by each question for ease of reading.

Question one

I can confirm that the overall processing timeframe stated on our website has increased from 13-14 months, to 13-15 months due to the ceremony allocation timeframe having been updated, in turn affecting the total timeframe.

Although applicants usually receive their citizenship certificate within one month of being approved, it can sometimes be longer. The timeframe was therefore updated to reflect this, and to be consistent with the approval letters and the ceremony information page on our website; [Citizenship ceremonies | New Zealand Government \(www.govt.nz\)](https://www.govt.nz/citizenship-ceremonies), which both state up to two months.

It is important for me to note that neither processing timeframes, nor timeframes for allocation to a ceremony have not increased. This update was made to better reflect how long it can sometimes take for allocation to a ceremony, or for receiving a certificate when ceremonies are not being held.

Question two

As advised in our response to your previous Official Information Act request 2122-0076, the Department has transitioned citizenship processing from a paper-based application system supported by aging technology, to a modern customer-centred case management system supporting a fully online application process. Additionally, we had advised that the Department has several initiatives underway to reduce the citizenship application backlog, speed up processing, and improve general customer experience. Some of the initial initiatives implemented included more training, investing in technology changes to speed things up, and hiring more staff in a temporary capacity.

I can assure you that improvements to speed up processing are of top priority for the Department. However, the implementation of further plans to reduce the citizenship by grant backlog were delayed due to the impact of Omicron, which dramatically reduced our staffing capacity during March and April 2022.

I am pleased to advise that the Department is now in a position where it has been able to implement a series of changes which make greater use of the system's automated checking ability. The impact of these changes has resulted in a reduction of average processing timeframes, and in April the backlog was reduced by over 1500 applications. The changes made to date are anticipated to continue to reduce the backlog over the coming months.

Question three

Please refer to Appendix A attached alongside this letter for data on citizenship trained Life and Identity Service Officers and the number of applications they have processed.

I would like to advise that the Department does not forecast the number of applications expected to be processed. This portion of question three must therefore be refused pursuant to section 18(e) as the information requested does not exist.

As this information may be of interest to other members of the public, the Department has decided to proactively release a copy of this response on the DIA website. All requestor data, including your name and contact details, will be removed prior to release. The released response will be made available here: <https://www.dia.govt.nz/Official-Information-Act-Requests-2>.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne-Claire Wyseur', written in a cursive style.

Anne-Claire Wyseur
Manager Operational Policy and Official Correspondence (Acting)
Service Delivery and Operations