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Tēnā koe Ed

### **OIA request 22/23 0442 Request for unallocated citizenship application data**

Thank you for your Official Information Act (Act) request received by the Department of Internal Affairs (Department) on 4 December 2022.

You requested –

- *I have been watching the data on your website about the unallocated backlog of citizenship applications by month. I note that the rate of change has substantially decreased in the last few months with many fewer unallocated applications being processed.*
- *Please provide any information you have to explain that. Was it due to rising numbers of applications? Decreasing staff capacity? Other reasons?*

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

The number of unallocated applications represents the number of applications we have not been able to allocate yet. The number reducing month on month shows we are processing more applications than we receive. For example, if the unallocated number is zero, it would mean we are able to allocate applications to be processed as soon as we receive them.

You have asked for information about the variation in the rate in which the backlog of citizenship applications have been reduced each month.

Please see Appendix A, Table One – Number of total Applications received, the number of total applications processed from January – December 2022 as of 12 January 2023 attached alongside this letter. I have included this table which provides additional information from the website that you viewed, showing the number of applications received (which does vary across the year) and the number of applications completed in a given month.

Since March 2022, the backlog has reduced month on month (by varying amounts).

The principal reason for the variation each month is due to the mix of applications completed in a given month, including how many have been completed via an expedited process, how many were simpler applications allocated to newly trained staff members, and how many required full manual assessment.

The proportion varies: in April and May we had a large number of applications which could follow an expedited pathway based on the results of automated checks. The backlog of this type of application has largely been eliminated, and these are now generally processed in under a month by a small number of staff.

Newly trained staff initially worked on simpler applications. Later in 2022 they received additional training and are now focussing on the oldest applications which require more checks and can take longer to process.

There is continued review of operational processes and practices in light of the capabilities of our new online system, and refining process based on data and analysis. Each time this is done a number of applications from the general queue can be filtered out and processed via the expedited process, which leads to a temporary bump in numbers while the applications are worked through.

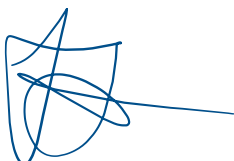
While the mix of applications is the primary reason for the fluctuation, the number of applications in a given month also depends on the availability of staff (impacted too by COVID illness) and the proportion of staff in training. Mid-year citizenship throughput was also impacted by the extraordinary demand for passports when borders reopened, leading to an influx of applications and calls, which temporarily diverted some citizenship resource.

The Department expect to continue to reduce the backlog significantly each month and have recently employed additional staff, while continuing to use data to identify refinements to the online system. It is also working to provide updated information on the Citizenship Timeframes page to respond to most common queries, and will be publishing datasets on data.govt.nz. Please also see the link <https://catalogue.data.govt.nz/dataset/status-of-citizenship-by-grant-applications-by-date-received-at-dia/resource/712409ae-d154-4ac9-a511-75627d4a9eb0> which gives you information on the Status of Citizenship by Grant applications by date received.

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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized, overlapping loop structure with a long horizontal tail extending to the right.

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