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Tēnā koe Mark

**OIA request 23/24 1086 Request for citizenship by grant statistics.**

Thank you for your Official Information Act (Act) request received by the Department of Internal Affairs (Department) on 18 June 2024.

You requested –

1. *I seek clarification on why submissions under the "approve" category require ministerial approval and are not handled on a scheduled basis.*
2. *For submissions under the "Intention to Reside" category, where applicants did not satisfy the DIA that they clearly intended to reside in New Zealand, from 01/01/2023 to 18/06/2024, I request the following information:*
  - The number of applications approved.*
  - The number of applications declined.*
  - The recommendation provided by the case officer for each application.*
  - The mean, median, maximum, and minimum time taken by the Minister to make a decision after submission.*
3. *For submissions under the "English" category, from 01/01/2023 to 18/06/2024, I request the following information:*
  - The number of applications approved.*
  - The number of applications declined.*
  - The mean, median, maximum, and minimum time taken by the Minister to make a decision after submission.*

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

### **Question one**

Under the Citizenship Act 1977 the Minister of Internal Affairs grants or declines to grant New Zealand citizenship. Ministers have, over time, delegated decisions on applications where applicants clearly meet all the criteria in section 8(1) of the Citizenship Act to senior officials. Ministers have delegated limited powers to senior officials to approve a grant of citizenship, under very limited circumstances, under sections 8(7) of the Citizenship Act. More information on these delegations is available in the Citizenship Guidance Document, which can be found on the Department's website, <https://www.dia.govt.nz/Citizenship-Guidance-Document>.

Submissions under the 'approve' category require Ministerial approval because the Department does not have the delegated authority to approve the application on a schedule. In some cases, the Department can consider that an applicant may meet a requirement, but that they do not clearly meet the requirement. Applicants who may meet a requirement, but do not clearly meet it, need to be referred to the Minister as a submission, but the Department may make a recommendation of 'approve'.

The Department does not have delegated authority to make decisions on applications made under section 9 of the Citizenship Act. The Department may consider that granting citizenship to an applicant who does not meet one or more of the standard requirements of the Citizenship Act would be in the public interest because of exceptional circumstances of a humanitarian or other nature relating to the applicant, but it is only the Minister who has the discretion to approve the application. In such cases, the application must be a submission to the Minister, but the Department may make a recommendation of approve.

### **Question two**

From 1 January 2023 to 18 June 2024, there were 11 submissions to the Minister for applicants who did not satisfy the Department that they clearly met the intention to continue to reside in New Zealand requirement. Please note, some of those applicants also failed to clearly meet other requirements.

Of those 11 submissions, three were approved and 8 were not approved. All 11 of the Minister's decisions were in accordance with the Department's recommendation, so three submissions had a recommendation of approve and eight had a recommendation of not approve.

The minimum time taken by the Minister to make a decision on a submission was one day, the maximum time was 103 days, the median was seven days, and the mean was 18 days.

### **Question three**

From 1 January 2023 to 18 June 2024, there were only two submissions sent to the Minister for applicants who did not clearly meet the English requirement. In both cases, there were multiple requirements that the applicant did not meet. Both submissions had a recommendation of approve and were approved by the Minister. For one of the submissions, the Minister took one day to make a decision, and for the other submission, the Minister made a decision on the same day.

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 its 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



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