

Policy – Citizenship ceremonies

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Scope

Applicants over the age of 14 years, who have been granted citizenship, are required to make an oath or affirmation of allegiance to New Zealand.

In most cases this occurs at a public ceremony conducted by a local authority, during which the oath or affirmation is made, and the applicant receives their citizenship certificate.

See: [Guidelines – Ceremonies for applicants granted citizenship](#)

Legislation

Citizenship Act 1977

Section 11 (Minister may require oath or affirmation of allegiance to be taken) of the Citizenship Act 1977 states:

1. The Minister may, in such case or class of cases as the Minister thinks fit, make the grant of New Zealand citizenship conditional upon the applicant taking an oath of allegiance in the form specified in the First Schedule, or making an affirmation to similar effect.
2. Unless the Minister agrees otherwise, the oath or affirmation must be taken or made at a public citizenship ceremony.

Oaths and Declarations Act 1957

The way that an oath or affirmation must be taken is set out in the Oaths and Declarations Act 1957.

The Act specifically refers to the oath being taken on a Bible, New Testament or Old Testament.

The Act also states, however, that 'The oath may be administered and taken in any manner which the person taking it may declare to be binding on him.'

This provision of the Act may be interpreted to allow an applicant to swear their oath on any holy book they choose or, should they choose, on no book at all.

Regulations

Regulation 7 of the Citizenship Regulations states:

7. Taking Of Oath Of Allegiance

1. The oath of allegiance set out in the Schedule 1 of the Act, or an affirmation to the same effect, may be taken—
 - a. in New Zealand, before a District Court Judge, a solicitor of the High Court of New Zealand, a Justice of the Peace, a member of Parliament, the mayor or deputy mayor of a territorial authority, the chairperson or deputy chairperson of a regional council, or the Secretary;
 - b. in any island of Tokelau, before the person elected as the Faipule for that island;
 - c. in any other country, before a New Zealand representative or such other British overseas representative as is authorised for the purpose by the Minister.
2. In any country in which there is no New Zealand or British overseas representative, the oath of allegiance or an affirmation to the same effect may be taken before—
 - a. any other Commonwealth representative; or
 - b. a Judge; or
 - c. a person who is authorised by the law of that country to administer oaths; or
 - d. a person who is authorised for that purpose by the Minister.
3. Where the Minister makes a grant of citizenship conditional on the applicant taking the oath of allegiance or making an affirmation to the same effect,—
 - a. the Secretary must advise the applicant in writing of the requirement; and
 - b. the oath must be taken or the affirmation made within 1 year of the date of that letter; and
 - c. if the oath is not taken or the affirmation is not made within that time or within any further time that the Minister may allow, the grant of citizenship lapses.'

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General requirements

Applicants are required to swear the Oath or make the Affirmation of Allegiance to the King, as New Zealand's Head of State, at a public ceremony held by their local authority or at a ceremony held in-house at a Citizenship Office.

Exemptions

Applicants are exempt from attending a ceremony, if they:

- are under 14 years of age
- have received a grant pursuant to section 10 of the Citizenship Act 1977 which provides that anyone who was born to a New Zealand mother shall be given a grant
- are a New Zealand citizen by descent, who has applied for the grant of citizenship, or
- were a British child migrant
- do not fulfil the full capacity requirement of section 8 of the Citizenship Act 1977

In some situations, an applicant may be exempt from attending a public ceremony and can attend a private ceremony instead.

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Private Ceremonies

Private ceremonies require the consent of the Minister, and must be included as part of a submission to the Minister unless the reason is one that has been considered acceptable by agreement with the Minister.

See: [Policy – Private citizenship ceremonies](#)

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Certificate requirements

Applicants (except those specifically exempted) must attend a ceremony, and say the Oath or Affirmation of Allegiance before receiving their citizenship certificate.

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Deceased applicants

If a citizenship certificate is requested by a deceased applicant's family member(s), one can be issued if the applicant was exempt from attending a public ceremony

to take the Oath or Affirmation of Allegiance.

A citizenship certificate must not be issued if the deceased applicant:

- was granted citizenship by the Minister, subject to their taking the Oath or Affirmation of Allegiance, and
- did not attend a ceremony, or
- was not exempt from attending a ceremony.

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