


Policy – Private citizenship ceremonies

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Background

An applicant may request that they attend a private ceremony rather than a public ceremony. 

Pre-approved reasons for private ceremonies

The Minister has pre-approved private ceremonies for applicants in the following circumstances:

- the applicant, or a family member of the applicant who applied at the same time, was approved for an English language waiver;
- the applicant has a family emergency overseas or the applicant (or other family member) needs to travel overseas for medical help;
- the applicant's spouse, civil union partner, or de facto partner has a family emergency overseas, or the applicant's spouse, civil union partner, or de facto partner's family member needs to travel overseas for medical help;
- the applicant was given refugee status and provides evidence that he/she cannot travel on a Refugee Travel Document and needs to travel overseas urgently;
- the applicant is a sportsperson seeking selection or travelling to compete for New Zealand;
- the applicant is off on a 'big OE' e.g an extended period of travel and will be away longer than 12 months, and the grant will lapse while they are away
 - **Note:** The Minister must have already been satisfied that the applicant meets the intention to reside requirement.
- the applicant is a rural General Practitioner who owns his or her own surgery and is on-call;
- the applicant is a Samoan citizen who has been approved for citizenship under the Citizenship (Western Samoa) Act 1982 and does not speak enough English to publicly swear allegiance; or
- the applicant is living overseas and was approved via schedule. (this normally includes Samoan citizen applicants or those working on Crown service).

For the avoidance of doubt, the family of an applicant's spouse, civil union partner or de facto partner may be considered a member of the applicant's family.

Requests for private ceremonies outside the circumstances identified above must be sent to the Minister as a submission.

Assessing requests for private ceremonies based on pre-approval reasons

The applicant must put their request for a private ceremony in writing such as an email.

To determine whether the applicant's circumstances fit within the pre-approved reasons for a private ceremony supporting evidence may be requested.

The nature of the evidence that the applicant can be expected to provide will depend on:

- the pre-approved reason relied on for requesting a private ceremony; and
- the circumstances surrounding the request.

If satisfied based on the supporting evidence provided that the applicant's circumstances fall within one or more of the pre-approved reasons they may be approved to attend a private ceremony.

Situations where an applicant is unable to obtain supporting evidence for reasons beyond their control

An applicant may not be able to obtain supporting evidence for reasons beyond their control due to the unique circumstances surrounding their request for a private ceremony.

Where these circumstances arise the request must be referred to the Team Leader of the Ceremonies and Support Team for a decision.

A request for a private ceremony should not be declined only because the applicant is unable to provide supporting evidence that other applicants are normally able to provide when requesting a private ceremony for the same pre-approved reason(s).

A signed written statement may be provided as evidence if the applicant is unable to obtain other forms of supporting evidence for reasons beyond their control.

The signed written statement must:

- explain the attempts made to request supporting evidence;
- explain the circumstances preventing supporting evidence being obtained;
- include any other evidence demonstrating that their circumstances meets a pre-approved reason(s) for a private ceremony (such as phone calls, text messages and/or emails to the applicant showing why the applicant needs to travel urgently); and
- be signed by the applicant (including digital signature).

If satisfied that it is more likely than not, based on the information provided in the written statement, that the applicant's circumstances fall within one or more of the pre-approved reasons they may be approved to attend a private ceremony by the Team Leader of the Ceremonies Team.

Consequences of providing false information to the Department

It is an offence to provide false information for the purposes of obtaining New Zealand citizenship by grant.

The person providing the written statement can be prosecuted if the information provided is incorrect under section 27 of the Citizenship Act 1977.

Additionally, the Department could make a recommendation to the Minister to deprive the applicant of their New Zealand citizenship under section 17 of the Citizenship Act if the information provided is later determined to be false.

Related pages

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