

Guidelines – Citizenship ceremonies

Use these guidelines as general information about ceremonies for applicants granted citizenship.

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Role

Life and Identity Services Officer

Citizenship ceremonies

Attendance

Attending a ceremony is an integral part of the citizenship application process. An applicant does not normally become a New Zealand citizen until they have attended:

- a ceremony
- taken the oath or affirmation of allegiance, and
- received their citizenship certificate.

The Ceremony

New citizens are welcomed to the community by the public swearing of allegiance to New Zealand and its reigning Sovereign.

The citizenship ceremony gives a sense of occasion to the process of becoming a citizen and allows new citizens to publicly commit to their obligations and responsibilities as New Zealand citizens.

The ceremony is usually presided over by the Mayor or Deputy Mayor of a local council. Other prominent members of the community may attend. Some councils include a greeting in Māori delivered by local kaumatua.

Oath or affirmation of allegiance

The applicant has the choice of electing to take an oath or affirmation of allegiance in English or Māori during the ceremony. Both are publicly available.

[Read the oath and affirmation of allegiance](#)

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Exceptions

Citizens 13 years and under are not required to attend a ceremony. The citizenship certificate can be sent by courier.

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Life and Identity Services Officer responsibilities

The Life and Identity Services Officer (LISO) will be responsible for:

- liaising with local councils to organise suitable ceremony dates
- allocating applicants to a ceremony
- sending out ceremony invitations, and
- producing and distributing citizenship certificates.

All enquiries from an applicant regarding ceremonies should be referred to

Citizenship.Ceremonies@dia.govt.nz

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Types of ceremonies

There are four types of ceremonies:

- public
- private
- in house
- overseas.

Public ceremonies

Public ceremonies are held by local councils. Most applicants approved on a schedule attend a public ceremony.

Private ceremonies

Applicants who want a private ceremony must submit a written request. If their application has not yet been approved, then they send the request to the processing LISO. Once approved, the applicant must send the request to Citizenship.Ceremonies@dia.govt.nz

The request should include any relevant evidence.

Acceptable reasons for private ceremony

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;
- 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.

Conducting private ceremonies

Private ceremonies are conducted by:

- LISOs in the Department's premises
- Justices of the Peace

- Solicitors
- Members of Parliament
- other persons authorised by the Minister.

In-house ceremonies

In-house ceremonies are de-facto public ceremonies held at the Department's offices when it suits the LISO and the local authorities purposes.

An applicant may attend an in-house ceremony due to:

- matters of urgency
- being unable to attend a public ceremony
- not meeting the criteria for a private ceremony
- the volume of people waiting for public ceremonies.

Note: Although it isn't stated explicitly, an in-house ceremony normally involves more than one person. The usual practice is at least two people.

Overseas ceremonies

Overseas ceremonies are held by a High Commissioner, Ambassador or Consul-General outside New Zealand. Overseas ceremonies require the approval of the Minister and are arranged when people are unable to return to New Zealand or have other valid reasons for being overseas. They still must meet the requirements for the grant of citizenship.

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Urgent requests

All urgent requests should be referred to the Services and Access Manager. The applicant must put their request in writing. Each urgent request is assessed on a case by case basis and the applicant may be allocated to an earlier public ceremony or to another ceremony type.

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Special requests

There are some special circumstances in which an applicant may be eligible for another ceremony type other than public. These circumstances might include, for example:

- representing New Zealand overseas in sport, or
- military deployment overseas.

Special requests need to be submitted in writing to the processing LISO, or ceremonies LISO. If the request is also urgent then it must be referred to the Services and Access Manager.

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