



21 September 2021

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Dear Nick

**Official Information Act 1982 request 2122-0173 – Citizenship processing timeframes**

Thank you for your Official Information Act (Act) request received by the Department of Internal Affairs (Department) on 24 August 2021.

You requested –

*Your processing time calculation is deceptive. It does not include the crucial wait time of the application. From the perspective of the applicant including the wait time is important and in general, should be always included in the processing time. This is the reason why the average values for online and paper applications are similar. You have not disclosed when the applications mentioned in the table were allocated to LISO.*

*For transparency and accountability purposes, please revise the table and show the processing times based on when the applicant made payment for the application and when a decision was made for that applicant.*

In response to your request, please see attached for Appendix A. Appendix A provides you with the following information for citizenship by grant applications received:

- *Table one – Breakdown of processing times for total number of paper applications (date created to decision date) received in the month October 2020*
- *Table two – Breakdown of processing times for paper applications (date created to decision date) received in the month October 2020, by office location*
- *Table three – Breakdown of processing times for total number of online applications (date created to decision date) received in the month October 2020*
- *Table four – Breakdown of processing times for online applications (date created to decision date) received in the month October 2020, by office location.*

This information has been updated since your last request, to measure the processing time from the date an application is submitted and/or created in the system, to the decision date.

However, it is important for me to explain that the Department measures the citizenship processing timeframe as the time from when an application is allocated to a citizenship trained Life and Identity Services Officer (LISO), to when a decision is made. Because of this, the previous dataset provided to you did not include the time where an application is 'waiting to be allocated'.

You will also note that there are variances in the average processing times based on office location. There are several factors that have contributed to this, including staff availability, the introduction of a new processing system and COVID-19 restrictions.

The Department currently has initiatives underway to reduce the citizenship application backlog, speed up processing, and improve general customer experience. In the immediate term this includes hiring additional temporary staff who will focus on reducing the backlog of paper applications, freeing up most existing staff to work exclusively on online applications.

We expect that the time taken for staff to process in the new online system should reduce as they become more familiar with our new system. We are also continuing to develop this new system and train more existing staff to process citizenship applications. Taken together the range of initiatives should see a decrease in the backlog in coming months.

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.

Yours sincerely



Julia Taylor  
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Service Delivery and Operations