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Tēnā koe Mohamed

**OIA request 22/23 0020 Request for information relating to citizenship processing timeframes**

Thank you for your Official Information Act (Act) request received by the Department of Internal Affairs (Department) on 7 July 2022.

You requested –

*Today the announcement for processing times as per the below link added a further 2 months weeks of delays in processing time from the time in March 2022 ( 14 months vs 16 + months announced today)*

*What makes me and thousands of applicants who applied either on paper or an earlier time in 2021 is unfairly allocated to case officer considering they don't appear on the automated check group which.*

*it is understood processing of applications time might be different from one applicant to another but allocation should be fairly on first come first served bases. otherwise, there is huge unfairness in that process.*

*I think the processing team is giving indirect priority to handling and reducing the back long on the expenses of other applicants who have been waiting for more than a year for the processing of their citizenship applications.*

*I would assume the priority for the department is supporting applicants in their submission/eligibility bases but not just reducing backlog numbers. Could you please confirm this?*

*Also, Need to know what it is your plans to have the assignment to the case officers allocation enhanced from today's range of 2-14 Months!!!*

*Finally, I would be looking for a number of approved / in-process applications and their submission date from June 2021 till June 2021.*

In response to the first portion of your request, I can confirm that the time taken for applications to be processed has not increased. The timeframes on the website have simply been updated to more accurately reflect how long it can take for an application to be allocated to a citizenship trained Life and Identity Services Officer (LISO) in some instances.

Initially the website stipulated up to 11 months for allocation, however, it has now been updated to reflect that in some instances, it can actually take up to 13 months. This in turn has affected the total timeframe range, taking it up to 16 months. It is important for me to explain that these timeframe ranges are estimates, and that 16 months is the highest end of the estimate. It does not mean that all applications now take 16 months.

In response to the data portion of your request, please refer to Appendix A attached alongside this letter.

In response to the remainder of your request, I must reiterate what was previously advised to you in our email of 17 June 2022.

In an effort to reduce the backlog of New Zealand citizenship by grant applications and speed up processing where possible, the Department has moved to assessing applications using more automated checks. These automated checks include matching the information the applicant supplies with Immigration New Zealand (INZ) records. We can then use the INZ information to confirm an applicant's eligibility, including automatically calculating whether they meet the presence requirement.

This means that some applications are now processed much more quickly than others, as they require fewer checks to be made by a LISO or are simpler to process and can be worked on by LISOs who are more recently trained. These applications that are identified using automated checks for a streamlined processing are grouped together, and then processed based on the date they were received. It is important for me to note that the majority of LISOs processing citizenship by grant applications are still working on the earliest-submitted applications first.

Reducing overall timeframes is of top priority for the Department in addition to reducing the backlog and I can confirm that the average time to process applications is now decreasing along with the backlog already having decreased by several thousand applications. This is a result of a range of factors including recruitment and training of additional LISOs, and review of our processes and policies which has resulted in the increased use of our system's automated checking capabilities.

These changes are expected to continue to reduce not only the backlog of applications awaiting allocation to an officer, but also the longest time applicants wait before their application is allocated.

I would like to note here that the Department has now responded to a significant number of requests from you for information relating to citizenship processing timeframes. The Department has no further information to provide regarding the citizenship backlog and processing timeframes, and considers the responses already provided to have been comprehensive.

Should you have an application that is of concern to you, I encourage you to contact the citizenship office directly on 0800 22 52 52 or at [citizenship@dia.govt.nz](mailto:citizenship@dia.govt.nz) for an update. However, I trust this letter has addressed the last of your concerns regarding official information.

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 the DIA 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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