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Tēnā koe Grant

Official information request

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) request of 7 November 2022 to the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service (NZSIS) seeking the following information:

In an 21 October 2022 article on RNZ by Gill Bonnett, NZSIS supplied information regarding the average response times for a National Security Check (NSC) for applicants for residency visas.

The article includes the following quote:

"[NZSIS's] data showed its average response time for a NSC check was 23 days. Citizenship requests were responded to on average after two days, while 'priority' residence visas took 38. Residence 2021 category took 46, while 'routine residence visas including Residence 2021' took 66."

[Part 1]: Can you please clarify what you meant by the word "priority" here? Is there a set of criteria used in determining which residence visa applications qualify as "priority" for the purposes of a NSC check? If so, what are those criteria? Or are there certain residency visa categories that receive a blanket designation as "priority", and if so, what are those categories?

[Part 2]: In addition, can you please provide a copy of the same data that was supplied to the author of that article in connection to NSC response times?

We advised you of the decision on your request on 5 December 2022 and can now provide you with the substantive response.

Response

Part 1:

The NZSIS contributes to the management of New Zealand's border by identifying and investigating security risks in support of New Zealand's border security agencies and of immigration decision-making.

In response to the first part of your request, in relation to priority residence visas, 'priority' means those that were actioned first. We conduct NSCs in response to Immigration New Zealand's (INZ) priorities, which are dynamic and change according to circumstances. The

NZSIS does not have its own set of criteria to determine which residence visa applications qualify as “priority”.

Part 2:

In regard to the second part of your request, the data provided to Radio New Zealand was that between 24 November 2021 and 24 May 2022, the average number of working days to respond to a national security check was 23 days. The time taken to respond to NSCs varies depending on the particular visa type.

The NZSIS undertakes NSCs to inform the decision maker’s approach to managing potential national security threats posed by applicants. The NZSIS is not a decision maker in the aviation security, citizenship or visa application process. We are limited to providing advice relevant to national security threats to help inform the decision making process.

In relation to residence and temporary visas, the NZSIS considers requests for national security checks received from INZ and responds to each request. If a request is incomplete we will return it to INZ with a request for further information.

The following table shows the average number of working days that elapsed for each application type from when the NZSIS received the request for a national security check until we responded.

A breakdown of the average number of working days by visa type is as follows:

Average number of working days to respond to a National Security Check request between 24 November 2021 and 24 May 2022

Visa type	Average working days
Aviation Security	1
Citizenships	2
Priority residence visas	38
Routine residence visas (including Residence 2021)	66
Residence 2021 category	46
Temporary visas	10

The following information is relevant when interpreting this data.

- The definition of a response to a NSC includes some applications that we have referred back to Immigration New Zealand for further information.
- The data provided is for the six month period 24 November 2021 – 24 May 2022. The time taken to respond to individual NSC requests varies across the year, for a number of reasons.
- A NSC response taking longer than the average timeframe is not necessarily indicative of a national security concern being identified.

Review

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact oiia.privacy@nzsis.govt.nz.

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 or freephone 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi



Rebecca Kitteridge

Te Tumu Whakarae mō Te Pā Whakamarumarū
Director-General of Security