



Te Pā Whakamarumarū
New Zealand Security
Intelligence Service

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21 March 2023

Muhammad

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Tēnā koe Muhammad,

Official information request

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) request of 21 February 2023 to the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service (NZSIS) seeking information about third party checks for residence visa applications. On 23 February 2023 the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment partially transferred your OIA request regarding third party checks to the NZSIS. As these two requests are related to the same issue I am providing one response.

You requested the following information.

1. *What is the current processing time of the third-party checks (NSC) for residence visa applications?¹ Please provide the most recent processing time for NSC checks as per visa categories, especially resident visas.*
2. *What procedures and actions are in place at NZSIS and Immigration New Zealand for such applicants who are affected from [delays]? Is NZSIS going to expedite the third-party checks (NSC) for such applicants? If no, What's the rationale behind it?*
3. *Does it mean that NZSIS is understaffed and unable to process those checks on time? What's the reason of this delay?*
4. *How much does NZSIS take to process those checks after the follow up/ expedition request from the Immigration New Zealand? If there is no timeframe to respond to Immigration New Zealand follow up/expedition requests, then why Immigration officers are not allowed to follow earlier than 6 months?*
5. *Is there any priority queue at NZSIS to process third party checks? If so, what is the criteria to qualify for the priority queue or expedited processing?*
6. *Has NZSIS taken any steps to reduce this time without compromising the security and integrity of the process?*

¹ This question was asked in both your 21 February and 23 February requests.

Response

The NZSIS supports border security agencies to maintain the integrity of New Zealand's border, and each year we conduct a significant number of National Security Checks (NSC). Immigration New Zealand (INZ), administers the visa application system, including the legislative framework under which NSCs are required. The NZSIS does not approve or decline visa applications, rather we provide assessments, on request, to help INZ make decisions.

The processing time for individual NSCs varies across the year, for a number of reasons. The NZSIS conducts NSCs in response to INZ's priorities, which are dynamic and change according to circumstances.

However, for the purpose of national security, we do not disclose information about individuals going through the process, or information about the process itself. As such, I must refuse your request under section 6(a) of the OIA, as the making available of the information would be likely to prejudice the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand.

Review

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact uia.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



Phil McKee

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