

K Nordmeyer

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Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 request, received by the Department of Internal Affairs (**Department**) on 2 November 2015. You have asked the following questions:

- 1. Can you please provide me with the policy reasons for and the legislative basis for the directions under question 33 [of the Adult Application for New Zealand Citizenship form] regarding headscarfs? The guide to this form refers to good character, national security and disclosure reasons, however the Citizenship Act 1977 s8(2)(c) refers only to good character.*
- 2. How is the wearing of a headscarf used to determine good character and is this information used in the Minister's discretion to issue or withhold a grant of citizenship?*
- 3. Can you please provide me with a sample of a decision showing the reasoning of how this information was used?*

Our response is as follows:

1. Question 33 is a "catch-all" question used to seek information not previously covered that might affect an application for citizenship. The applicant is required to produce two photographs with their application and Citizenship photograph policy adheres to the International Civil Aviation Organisation (**ICAO**) quality, style and appearance standards for passport photographs. In the case of head coverings, the facial features from the bottom of the chin to the top of the forehead and both edges of the face must be clearly shown.
2. The wearing of a head covering is not used to determine good character, nor does it affect the Minister's decision to grant citizenship. It may only be a factor in assessing whether the photograph provided meets ICAO standards.
3. A head covering may affect the citizenship grant process in a number of ways. I believe these points will respond fully to your request for 'a sample of a decision':
  - a. If an applicant wears a head covering, the Citizenship case officer handling their request may ask the reasons for the head covering. If they are wearing a head covering for a non-religious or non-medical reason, the applicant is asked to re-take the photograph without the covering. If a person is wearing a head covering for religious or medical purposes, this is noted and no further action is taken.
  - b. If a photograph does not meet ICAO standards, the applicant will be asked to produce a new photograph that meets the standards.
  - c. If the applicant requires an interview, the case officer will need to identify the applicant against their photograph at the time of the interview. If the applicant is wearing a head covering which conceals their facial features, the applicant will need to remove the covering. This is done respectfully, and in private, if the applicant



wishes. If a female applicant does not want a male case officer viewing their face, a female case officer will perform the identification. The Department respects each customer's beliefs and conditions in identifying them.

You have the right to request an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision under section 28 of the Official Information Act. The Ombudsman can be contacted at:

Office of the Ombudsman  
PO Box 10152  
Wellington 6143

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Briget Ridden', is positioned above the typed name.

Briget Ridden  
Manager Business Improvement and Support  
Births, Deaths, Marriages, Citizenship, Authentications and Translations