

Office of the Prime Minister

Prime Minister

Minister for National Security and Intelligence

Minister for Child Poverty Reduction

Minister Responsible for Ministerial Services

Associate Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage



23 NOV 2022

John
fyi-request-20815-01c4ec13@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: PMO 2022-315

Tēnā koe John

Official Information Act request regarding citizenship by grant application processing delays

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request, received on 10 October 2022. You requested:

- 1. "Is the Prime Minister monitoring the situation of the Citizenship by Grant processing delays currently happening at DIA's Citizenship Office?"*
- 2. What actions and or correspondence has the PMO has taken to direct DIA and it's responsible Minister to solve the issue with Citizenship by Grant application processing delays? Please provide copies.*
- 3. If there is no actions (from the question above), why hasn't the PMO took interest on the Citizenship by Grant application processing delays and how it affects the permanent resident of New Zealand life and mental health?"*

Regarding parts 1 and 2 of your request, citizenship processing delays fall within the portfolio responsibilities of the Hon Jan Tinetti, as the Minister responsible for the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA), rather than the Prime Minister.

There have been no actions or correspondence between the Prime Minister and Hon Jan Tinetti regarding this subject. I am therefore refusing part 2 of your request under section 18(e) of the Act, as the information does not exist.

Part 3 of your request would require this office to form an opinion or create new information in order to respond. We are therefore declining this part of your request as it does not constitute a request for official information under section 2 of the Act.

Regarding the application delays, DIA officials have advised that they have been endeavouring to reduce these timeframes as a top priority. The average time to process applications is decreasing and the backlog has decreased by several thousand applications over the past several months. More specifically, since wait times peaked in March 2022, DIA has reduced wait times by 42%, with the introduction of automated checks reducing the backlog by over 11,000 applications.

In an effort to reduce the backlog of New Zealand citizenship by grant applications and speed up processing where possible, DIA has moved to assessing applications using more automated checks. An example of these automated checks includes matching the information the applicant supplies with Immigration New Zealand (INZ) records. The INZ information can then be used to confirm whether an applicant meets the presence

requirement. Other steps include more training, investing in technology changes to speed things up, and establishing a temporary workforce dedicated to working through these applications.

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

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

Ngā mihi nui,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Raj Nahna
Chief of Staff