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Tēnā koe Kaizu

OIA request 22/23 0911 Request for Citizenship timeframes

Thank you for your Official Information Act (Act) request received by the Department of Internal Affairs (Department) on 1 June 2023.

You requested –

1. *Can you please provide application status by country in each bucket (workstream) separately for the citizenship applications submitted in Jan 2023 (online applications only)? E.g., Germany - Bucket 1 - Approved - 150*

2. *How long does it take (on average) for an application to be assigned to a case officer in each bucket (workstream)? E.g., bucket 1 - 390 working days (from the submission date)*

3. *In the same bucket, are applications assigned to a case office based on the principal of "first in first served"? If not, what are the criteria?*

4. *What is the processing time for the applications that failed automated checks (on average, each month since this was implemented)?*

5. *When will the processing time be reduced for the applications that failed automated checks?*

In response to your request, I can provide you with the following information.

Please be advised that the term "bucket" is an internal word we use. Essentially it means workstream. When you apply for New Zealand citizenship, your application is triaged into a workstream with similar applications. Putting applications into workstreams is an internal process which allows the Department to assign citizenship trained Life and Identity Service Officers (LISO) to process similar types of applications, based on their skills. Given this, we have replaced the word bucket with workstream in this response.

There are six different workstreams. All applications start off by being placed into workstream two and then are filtered into other workstreams using system logic. An overview of the workstreams is below:

- *Workstream one* – Applications from workstream 2 that were not automatically able to go into workstream 3, 4, 5 or 6, and that have been pre-assessed by an administrator for completeness.

- *Workstream two* – All applications begin in this queue are filtered to other queues using system logic. Applications that are not automatically able to go to workstream 3, 4, 5 and 6 remain in this queue until they are picked up by an administrator and pre-assessed for completeness, before then being moved to workstream 1.
- *Workstream three* – Online applications that meet all automated checks.
- Workstream four – Applications assessed under the Citizenship (Western Samoa) Act 1982.
- *Workstream five* – Online applications that meet all automated checks except presence and/or English. Manual assessment required.
- *Workstream six* – Applications submitted on paper that meet all automated checks.

Response

Question 1 Response

Refer to Appendix 1 – Table One

Question 2 Response

Workstream	Avg. Working days
Workstream 1	190
Workstream 2	155
Workstream 3	17
Workstream 4	58
Workstream 5	59
Workstream 6	56

Question 3 Response

Yes, applications in each workstream are allocated in order, based on the date the application was submitted.

Question 4 Response

Refer to Appendix 1 – Table Two

Applications do not necessarily 'fail' automated checks. The difference is between whether the system can automatically assess a requirement or if a manual assessment by a LISO is required.

The processing time for applications that were not able to be assessed by the system varies significantly. All applications require some manual assessment by a LISO; the amount of manual intervention depends on the number of checks the system can assess initially.

The time required to process applications that cannot be assessed by the system depends on various factors. These may include the complexity of the application, the nature of the information that needs manual review, the availability of resources for manual processing, and the overall volume of applications being handled.

Attempting to provide a precise average processing time for such applications is challenging due to the inherent variability in the data. Each application may require a different level of manual review, and the workload of the processing team can fluctuate based on various factors such as staff availability, priority of other tasks, and unforeseen circumstances.

Question 5 Response

Reducing the decision timeframes on citizenship applications is a priority for the Department.

It is important to note that all citizenship applications must be considered, and decided on, against a range of legislatively defined factors. The time it takes to process an application can differ depending on the applicant's individual circumstances and how much of their application the Department can assess using automated checks. Some manual checks rely on information from sources outside of New Zealand, with indeterminate timeframes.

In addition to establishing automated checks, the Department is taking several other measures to reduce processing time, including more training, investing in technology changes to speed up processing, and recruiting more staff.

Based on current trends and the additional measures detailed above, we expect to continue to reduce average wait times and the number of applications awaiting allocation.

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 its 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 or freephone 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi

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