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Tēnā koe John

OIA request 23/24 0649 Request for information on citizenship automated checks

Thank you for your Official Information Act (Act) request received by the Department of Internal Affairs (Department) on 24 February 2024.

You requested –

1. *What components will be checked by the latest automated check system?*
2. *List all reasons that an applicant may fail the automated check.*

In the response of OIA request 22/23 0798, DIA states that "No, declaring having used other names, whether officially or just in everyday life, does not affect the automated checks." However, in the previous corresponding, DIA has indicated that "some things do need a human check. For example, where the applicant has changed their name since migrating to New Zealand."

Based on the above point, I have the following queries:

3. *Please clarify the inconsistent response and confirm which one is the latest policy, and the details of the policy.*
4. *If there is a change of policy regarding this aspect, when did this policy implement?*
5. *Please clarify whether declaring having used other names, such as English name at workplace and daily life, will fail the automated checks and trigger the manual assessment.*

On the same day you submitted an additional question –

6. *If the name change is checked by the automated check system, how the system does the check?*

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

Your questions have been renumbered for ease of response.

Question one:

The Department regularly reviews and updates published citizenship application information based on feedback and commonly asked questions. I can advise that this information will soon

be publicly available at the following website: <https://www.govt.nz/browse/passports-citizenship-and-identity/nz-citizenship/how-to-apply-for-nz-citizenship/application-timeframes/>

As such, I must refuse this portion of your request pursuant to section 18(d) of the Act: that the information requested is or will soon be publicly available.

It might be helpful to also explain that the Department continually introduces and improves automated checks to the processing system. When an automated check is newly introduced or improved, the check is applied to all applications in the processing system. This is done regardless of when the application was received or the workstream it is in.

Question two:

I can advise that this information has already been made available on the Department's website via an Official Information Act response. This response has been proactively released here <https://www.dia.govt.nz/Official-Information-Act-Requests-2> with the reference number 2223-0798.

Therefore, I must refuse this portion of your request under section 18(d) of the Act; that the information requested is publicly available.

Questions three, four and five:

Both responses are correct, as declaring having used other names is not the same as having changed names since migrating to New Zealand. Declaring having used other names does not affect automated checks. If an applicant has changed their name since migrating to New Zealand, this may affect automated checks as the system uses the person's personal details to match with their record with Immigration New Zealand (INZ). If INZ do not have the same details, then a match may not be made, and some automated checks cannot be run. A manual check will be required. In addition, documents must be checked by a LISO to confirm any name change. Therefore, there is no change in 'policy'.

As such, I must refuse this portion of your request related to policy changes pursuant to section 18(g)(i) of the Act; the information requested is not held by the Department and the person dealing with the request has no grounds for believing that the information is held by another department.

It is important to emphasise that applicants must provide true, accurate and full information, as it is an offence to provide false information for the purposes of obtaining New Zealand citizenship by grant. Failure to disclose all names will likely slow processing of an application down.

Question six:

I can advise that there is a cross agency check in place comparing information available at the time of a visa being issued by INZ and the information provided by the applicant in their citizenship by grant application to the Department. If this information does not match, a manual assessment is required by a LISO.

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 the DIA 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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