



10 October 2022

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John

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Tēnā koe John

**OIA request 22/23 0250 Request for information on the processing of citizenship by grant applications**

Thank you for your Official Information Act (Act) request received by the Department of Internal Affairs (Department) on 16 September 2022.

You requested –

1. *Have DIA and Citizenship Office considered creating an IMT to speed up Citizenship by Grant applications?*
  - a. *if yes, please provide the IMT operation model, number of staff and work streams*
  - b. *if not, why not? What are the reasons that an IMT was not considered.*
2. *Does the Citizenship Office has an external agency monitoring the work towards reducing the backlog? (PSC, DPMC and etc).*
3. *Any Reports and or Memo(s) (in 2022) sent to the Service Delivery and Operations (SDO) Deputy Chief Executive regarding the performance and progress of the Citizenship Office towards reducing the Citizenship by Grant applications backlog.*
4. *Any Reports and or Memo(s) (in 2022) sent to the General Manager Services and Access regarding the performance and progress of the Citizenship Office towards reducing the Citizenship by Grant applications backlog.*
5. *Please provide all the assessment templates that Citizenship officers use to assess Citizenship by Grant applications that failed the automated checks.*

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

**Question one**

The Citizenship Office does not have an Incident Management Team for the processing of citizenship by grant applications. However, the Department is working hard behind the scenes to create and implement strategies to decrease the long wait times that are currently affecting citizenship applicants.

Some of these strategies include revisiting existing procedures and policies to process applications more efficiently, more training, investing in technology changes to speed things up, and establishing a temporary workforce dedicated to working through these applications. Also, the introduction of automated checks has already significantly reduced average processing times, and we expect this to continue to reduce the backlog of applications.

It may be helpful to explain that there is no set standard processing timeframe for citizenship application, this is because every application is different. The processing timeframes on <https://www.govt.nz/browse/passports-citizenship-and-identity/nz-citizenship/how-to-apply-for-nz-citizenship/application-timeframes/> are indicative only.

### **Question two**

I can advise that no external agency monitors the processing of citizenship by grant applications.

### **Questions three and four**

No reports or memos are sent to either the Service Delivery and Operations Deputy Chief Executive (SDO DCE) or the General Manager Services and Access (GM S&A). Therefore, I must refuse this portion of your request pursuant to section 18(e) of the Act; that the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

I note in a previous request you asked for copies of reports to the Minister of Internal Affairs and were advised they will be proactively released. As these reports are also provided to the SDO DCE and GM S&A, they are not considered to fall within scope of this request.

### **Question five**

Citizenship trained Life and Identity Services Officers do not use assessment templates for processing citizenship by grant applications which fail the automated checks. Therefore, I must also refuse this portion of your request pursuant to section 18(e) of the Act; that the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

I refer you again to the document previously mentioned in a response to you; the *Citizenship Guidance Document* which is publicly available on the Department's website here, <https://www.dia.govt.nz/Citizenship-Guidance-Document>.

This document is intended to:

- provide transparency about the Minister's policies and how citizenship legislation is interpreted and applied by the Department
- provide clarity for applicants and their agents about what they may be asked to provide
- guide the exercise of delegated authority by officials in processing and making decisions
- provide clarity about when applications should be referred for the Minister's decision
- support consistent and fair decision making on citizenship applications by the Minister and officials

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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi

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

Julia Taylor  
Manager Operational Policy and Official Correspondence  
Service Delivery and Operations