

DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY WRITTEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Select Committee on COVID-19

QoN Number: CV19-51

Subject: Online Citizenship Ceremony Selection

Asked by: Kristina Keneally

Question:

How are successful applicants selected to participate in an online citizenship ceremony?

Answer:

The Department of Home Affairs is inviting applicants:

- who had already been scheduled to attend an in-person ceremony that was subsequently cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions; and
- with the longest wait times since being approved for citizenship.

The Department is also giving priority consideration to applicants who seek an urgent citizenship ceremony due to exceptional circumstances (for example, where Australian citizenship is required to secure employment).

| | | |
|---|-------|---------|
| Date Approved: 13 May 2020 | | |
| SES Contact Officer: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) | | |
| Consultation: N/A | | |
| Additional Clearance from: (Highlight applicable) | Legal | Finance |
| Statistics | | |

Updated mailbox automatic response 8/5/2020

Thank you for your email and interest in online video citizenship ceremonies.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all in-person citizenship ceremonies have been placed on hold until further notice.

The Department of Home Affairs has introduced online citizenship ceremonies for clients in Australia via secure video link. Ceremonies will be performed virtually with a presiding officer, and will continue to include integrity measures, such as identity requirements.

If you have genuine exceptional or compelling circumstances for an urgent online citizenship ceremony you must provide full details of your urgent request and supporting evidence. For example, this may include a letter of offer from an employer where you are required to have Australian citizenship. Urgent cases will be reviewed and assessed as required.

The following types of circumstances are not considered genuinely exceptional or compelling:

- Your ceremony was cancelled by your local council.
- Any circumstances relating to overseas travel which are not exceptional or compelling.

Consideration will be provided in the following circumstances:

- Defence Force personnel
- Clients who need to be an Australian Citizen to be employed for a job they have been offered

As you can appreciate, there is a high demand for online citizenship ceremonies and we ask that you be patient whilst we work through our on-hand caseload. Conferees will receive an invitation based on the date their application for Australian citizenship was approved. During these unprecedented times, wait times may exceed six months from the date of citizenship approval.

Please note during COVID-19, citizenship approval will not be cancelled if you do not attend a ceremony and make the pledge of commitment within the 12 months from your notice of approval.

Online citizenship ceremonies are currently unavailable for clients who are outside of Australia at this stage.

Thank you for your patience and understanding in these unprecedented times.

Citizenship Ceremonies Section

Department of Home Affairs

Updated mailbox automatic response 19/05/2020

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The Department is inviting clients to attend an online ceremony based on the date of citizenship approval. You may also be contacted to attend an in-person ceremony once they recommence.

Please note during COVID-19, citizenship approval will not be cancelled if you do not attend a ceremony and make the pledge of commitment within the 12 months from your notice of approval.

Online citizenship ceremonies are currently unavailable for clients who are outside of Australia at this stage.

Thank you for your patience and understanding in these unprecedented times.



Request for urgent citizenship ceremony

This form must be completed to be considered for an urgent citizenship ceremony. All fields must be completed and evidence must be supplied.

| Client details: (all fields must be completed) | | | | | |
|--|--|--|----------|--------------------------------|--|
| Client ID: | | Application ID: | | Date of Birth: | |
| First Name: | | | Surname: | | |
| Citizenship approval date: | | Date of citizenship ceremony invitation: | | Date of ceremony cancellation: | |

| Reasoning | |
|---|--|
| Please explain why you are requesting an urgent ceremony: | |
| | |
| Requested ceremony date: | |

| Evidence |
|--|
| You must provide evidence to support why you require an urgent ceremony. Evidence can sent in an email as an attachment. |
| |

Trial Phase:

During the trial phase and initial stand up of online ceremonies, clients who had contacted s. 22(1)(a)(ii) with an urgent need to attend an online ceremony were s to ensure the system was fit for purpose and online ceremonies were achievable.

Delivery Network Rollout:

As the trial phase is now complete and online ceremonies have been rolled out across all state and territory offices in Australia, the Department of Home Affairs is inviting clients to attend an online ceremony based the date their citizenship application was approved. The following information was provided in a Question on Notice response dated 13 May 2020 regarding how successful applicants are selected to participate in an online ceremony s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

- Clients who had already been scheduled to attend an in-person ceremony that was subsequently cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions; and
- Clients with the longest wait times since being approved for citizenship.

The Department is also giving priority consideration to applicants who seek an urgent citizenship ceremony due to exceptional circumstances.

Mailbox and Urgent Requests:

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) automatic response was updated on 8 May 2020 and subsequently on 19 May 2020 to provide further information regarding urgent ceremony requests s. 22(1)(a)(ii) however as all states and territories are now conducting online ceremonies, the s. 22(1)(a)(ii) mailbox will be decommissioned in the coming weeks and urgent ceremony requests will be managed by the respective states using the urgent ceremony standard operating procedures. Clients will need to complete the urgent ceremony request form s. 22(1)(a)(ii) and provide evidence as required for the state and territory offices to review and consider.

The following types of circumstances for an urgent ceremony are not considered genuinely exceptional or compelling:

- An in-person ceremony was cancelled by a local council.
- Any circumstances relating to overseas travel which are not exceptional or compelling.

Consideration for urgent ceremonies will be provided in the following circumstances:

- Defence Force personnel
- Clients who need to be an Australian Citizen to be employed for a job they have been offered
- Exceptional or compelling overseas travel (noting in the current environment a travel exemption must be sought from the Department of Home Affairs - s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

[REDACTED]

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