



Ministerial Professional Development Practice Note

Topic: Private Citizenship Ceremonies

Date: February 2023 (AFS/AC)

Most new immigrants become citizens at a public ceremony usually conducted by the Mayor or Deputy Mayor of a city/town. The ceremony is a very important and exciting time for our new citizens.

However, there may be reasons which prevent a person attending the public ceremony and a JP can be asked to conduct a private citizenship ceremony.

The client must get approval from the Minister of Internal Affairs before they approach a JP. The Minister of Internal Affairs can allow an applicant to attend a private ceremony or can waive the requirement that a person attends any ceremony.

At a ceremony held at the Wellington CAB a few years ago, the team put up a NZ flag and sang a few verses of the NZ National Anthem with the help of some CAB volunteers. The family were absolutely delighted with the ceremony and brought cakes to say thank you. They were a refugee family and were granted leave for a private ceremony as the elderly parents had a waiver of the English language requirement. On another occasion, our President did a private citizenship ceremony for a member of one of our national sports teams between their playing commitments. The client's family came in via Zoom from their country of origin and, being a member of a national sports team, there was excellent national anthem singing in Te Reo Māori and English. And on another occasion, the ceremony was conducted in a hospital ward which was immensely moving.

There are a few pre-approved reasons why a person can request a private ceremony. If you get a request for one of these, direct your client to the [Citizenship Guidance Document](#) (Page 27) on the New Zealand Government's website to see if they fit the criteria.

Evidence to support a request for a private ceremony

The nature of the evidence that the applicant can be expected to provide will depend on the pre-approved reason relied on for requesting a private ceremony, and the circumstances surrounding the request.

If, based on the evidence provided, the Minister of Internal Affairs is satisfied that the applicant's circumstances fall within one or more of the pre-approved reasons, they may be approved to attend a private ceremony. When an applicant has been **approved for a private citizenship ceremony**, they will be sent a Private Ceremony Arrangement Form.

There are two sections on the form that need to be completed: the Ceremony Details and the Administrator's Details sections (the JP being the Administrator). When filling out the form, the applicant needs to use pen, and print clearly using block capitals.

The ceremony details

This section has only one part to complete: the date that the ceremony will be held. The date must be negotiated between the Administrator and the applicant and must be fixed to one date.

The Administrator's details

This section provides the details of the person who will administer the Oath or Affirmation. The address provided must not be a PO Box or Private Bag. The certificate package (along with the certificate there is a welcome letter and a hard backed book) will require a signature on delivery and cannot be delivered to a PO Box or Private Bag.

The package will be delivered during normal business hours (usually mornings for business addresses, and afternoons for residential addresses). The applicant needs to provide an address where there will be someone to sign for the package. If they live in Central Wellington, the Department is not averse to them making a time to pick up the package.

Two restrictions on what day can be selected for the ceremony

The ceremony must be at least 3 weeks after the applicant returns the arrangement form to the Citizenship Ceremonies Office and it must be held before the applicant's grant of citizenship lapses. This date is different for each applicant and is specified on the form.

Apart from these two restrictions, you are free to agree on a mutually suitable date, time and location with the applicant.

When to get the certificate

The certificate is included in the package and delivery will be timed to arrive at the Administrator's address on the working day immediately before the day of the ceremony. If you require the package to be delivered earlier than this, please contact the [Wellington Citizenship Ceremonies Office](#).

On the day of the Private Ceremony

The Administrator will follow the order of service as written in the instructions (in the package) – take the Oath or Affirmation (words provided) and then check that the deponent's full name, date and place of swearing (or affirming) are correctly written on the form. The deponent and the Administrator then sign the form in the spaces provided. The form should be returned by the Administrator to the address provided as soon as possible. Scanning and emailing is acceptable.