Media release

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Statement on passport processing times

The Department of Internal Affairs is working hard to turn around passport wait times. The Department understands that extended wait times impact our customers and apologises for the inconvenience and stress this can cause.

In March, the Department introduced an upgrade to the passport processing system, which allows customers to do more online and shore up its passports processing systems. The upgrade has meant significant changes to how staff process passport applications. This has resulted in a larger queue in our system, and a sharp increase in the average time it takes for a passport to be issued.

DIA expected and planned for the system upgrade to temporarily affect productivity and passport timeframes, but the effect was sharper and more prolonged than expected. This prompted the establishment of a dedicated team to identify and resolve any issues affecting production.

Reducing wait times is a priority for the Department and work to reduce processing times is underway. Several interventions have been established, including a dedicated team to respond to the situation, tuning of the new system to make it work more efficiently, providing additional support and training for staff across domestic and international sites and fast-tracking the recruitment of additional front-line staff.

These interventions and other actions are increasing processing productivity and the difference between applications received and applications processed is improving.

Many applications are processed promptly. Last week, 56% of applications issued were within 15 working days which is a 7% increase on the previous week. 74% of applications were issued within 30 working days.

With the added focus on returning to our service standards as quickly as possible, we expect to be using our new system with full efficiency by the end of this month.

This will enable us to issue more passports more quickly.

Our aim is to ensure half of all passports are issued within two weeks, and 75% of all passports issued within six weeks, by the end of June. By the end of July, we expect to be issuing 75% within two weeks, 90% within four weeks and 95% within six weeks. We are targeting over 90% being issued within two weeks by the end of August.

The Department is already seeing some of the benefits of the upgrade which provide better functionality for customers, making it quicker, easier and more convenient for New Zealanders to apply for their passport.

Over 88% of all passport applications are completed online, and this is expected to grow to 93%. One of the biggest improvements is that families or groups of people applying at the same time are now able to do so online. Previously, these groups or whānau would have to use paper forms. Now, 32% of all applications have been received as group applications, saving people time when applying as a family or group. Getting a replacement for a lost, stolen or damaged passport has been made easier as customers no longer need to supply their previous passport number, or have to contact the Department or submit paper forms for a replacement. 2,603 replacement passports have already been issued under the new system. Over 8,000 customers have coapplied for a RealMe verified account, saving them a separate application process, and allowing them to access more services.

Currently, the Department is advising customers to allow up to 10 weeks plus delivery to receive their passport.  The advertised timeframe is to ensure customers are aware of the time it may take to issue their passport and can plan accordingly.

Customers with a current application who have an urgent need to travel should contact the Department of Internal Affairs.

Prospective customers can support faster turn-around by ensuring that they have the correct information when they apply. DIA encourages people to visit passport.govt.nz/passport-photos for full guidance on passport photo requirements which can extend passport processing times if not met.

**DIA’s general advice to Kiwis for getting their passport in time remains the same:**

* Check if you need to apply for a passport as soon as you start planning your trip.
* If you need to renew your passport or apply for a new one, do it online. Applying online is the easiest, fastest way to get a New Zealand passport.
* Check the latest information about passports cost, timeframes and delivery on the passport website – passports.govt.nz.
* Consider the processing timeframes when applying for your passport and allow extra time for delivery.

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