

24 May 2024

By email to: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUEST 2024/31

On 8 May 2024 you made a request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA) for the following information:

Can you advise the whole process for checking and verification of enrolments for general elections as an eligible voter.

Including all checks and verifications for eligibility as a citizen or a permanent resident. Including but not limited to cross matching with other government agencies.

And that the individual has lived in NZ continuously for one year or more.

Please also include how this is recorded and where the details of each of these forms are held, and for how long.

Under the Electoral Act 1993 (the Act), any person applying to enrol must provide their full name, date of birth (DOB), and residential address. As well as the mandatory information, applicants can choose whether to provide additional information including a postal address if different from the residential address, occupation, honorific, whether or not they are of Māori descent, and telephone number/s.

Applications must be made either in writing using the Electoral Commission's prescribed form which must be signed by the applicant, or online using an approved electronic medium (i.e. using our Enrol Online service where the applicant must verify their identity using their NZ driver licence, NZ passport or the Government's RealMe verified identity service).

To be qualified to enrol to vote a person must be 18 years or older, a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident for electoral purposes and have lived in New Zealand continuously for at least 12 months at some time. The person applying is required to make a declaration confirming they are eligible to enrol at the address provided, all the information provided is true and correct and that they understand giving false or misleading information is a criminal offence.

It is an offence to wilfully make a false statement on an enrolment form. The offence carries a penalty of a fine not exceeding \$2,000 or imprisonment of up to 3 months (section 118 of the Act).

It is an offence to wilfully mislead the Electoral Commission in the compilation of the roll, or by providing a false name, or signing as any other person. The offence of wilfully misleading the Commission carries a penalty of a fine not exceeding \$2,000 (section 119 of the Act).

Checks on receipt

All applications for new enrolment are checked to ensure that the mandatory information provided is accurate and valid. Any optional information provided is also taken into consideration when assessing the validity of the application.

These checks are undertaken by the Enrolment Officer using the information provided on the form and aided by the Commission's enrolment management system. Where there is a discrepancy, incomplete information, or a conflict in the information provided, the matter is immediately flagged for further investigation and clarification will be sought from the applicant before it is accepted as a valid application (except in very clear cases in which the application is rejected outright).

When checking the name and DOB, the Enrolment Officer will look at historical information held by the Commission in relation to the applicant's previous enrolments, and as applicable, information from external sources such as Immigration NZ and DIA (see below for what information is provided by other agencies).

When checking the residential address, the Enrolment Officer will check the enrolment database and/or external address information to ensure the address provided is valid and the type of dwelling at that address (e.g. residential property, rest home, military barracks).

If there is any conflict in other information provided, and there are previous enrolment records for the applicant, signatures are checked against previous documents.

The final verification step in the application process is that an acknowledgement letter is sent by post to the applicant at the address provided. If that correspondence cannot be delivered, and is returned 'gone no address', the Enrolment Officer knows that the elector is not eligible to enrol at the address and the application is investigated further to establish correct enrolment details. If that investigation does not result in establishing the correct details, the applicant is moved to the dormant roll.

Elector records and checks built into the enrolment management system

Enrolment records are managed in the Commission's enrolment management system. Physical forms received by post are scanned and recorded in the system.

Reports are run on a monthly basis using the enrolment management system on variations of name, DOB and residential address to detect any potential duplicate entries on the roll. In high activity periods, these are run weekly.

A number of checks are built into the system to detect suspicious activity and automatically prompt Commission staff to investigate further.

The following notifications from other agencies are processed in the system daily:

- Disqualified prisoners list (section 81 of the Act)
- Notifications of deaths, marriages and civil unions and change of name (sections 92 to 94 of the Act)
- Immigration information (section 263A of the Act)

If at any stage, the Enrolment Officer is concerned about the validity of an enrolment, the Enrolment Officer will attempt to contact the elector and if necessary, arrange for formal notification to be served on the elector by personal delivery at the elector's address.

The Commission is required to keep an application for registration as an elector for at least two general elections since the record was made (section 124 of the Act). Electors most recent valid applications for registration are used to produce the electoral rolls (which include the full name, residential address and occupation of electors for each district). The public can inspect the rolls, and a person also has a right to inspect their own application for registration as an elector (section 110 of the Act).

In the interests of transparency, we release responses to Official Information Act requests every 3 months. We will publish this response with your personal details redacted.

You have the right under section 28(3) of the Act to make a complaint to the Ombudsman if you are not satisfied with the response to your request. Information about how to do this is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by phoning 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Ross McPherson
Director, Enrolment
Electoral Commission