



29 June 2017

Request for information relating to the number of days Peter Thiel had spent in New Zealand prior to gaining citizenship.

The Department of Internal Affairs (Department) was asked under the Official Information 1982 (OIA Act) to release:

...the number of days Peter Thiel had spent in New Zealand for the five years before his citizenship was granted; and

The number of days Peter Thiel spent in New Zealand in the twenty months before his citizenship was granted.

The Department does not generally release citizenship information. The particular circumstances of this case and the fact of Mr Thiel's citizenship was already in the public domain lead the Department to consider that the privacy interest for Mr Thiel had been lowered sufficiently to allow some details of his application to be released. However, there were some details that Department declined to release under section 9(2)(a) of the OIA Act. The Department believed that the information released had already satisfied the public interest in accountability and transparency in the decision making process.

The Office of the Ombudsman investigated this decision and on 28 June 2017 found that the Department should not have declined this request, and recommended that the Department release the information.

The Department respects and abides by the Office of the Ombudsman's decision on this matter. The following document contains the newly released information.

CIT 2011000002 SP WGN 1

22 June 2011

MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS**APPLICATION FOR NEW ZEALAND CITIZENSHIP****CITIZENSHIP
Raraunga**

Identity Services Group

Te Ratonga Tuakiri

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Applicant: Mr Peter Andreas Thiel
Date of birth: 11 October 1967
Place of birth: Frankfurt, Germany
Present citizenships: German and U.S.

SUMMARY**Reason for submission**

Mr Thiel does not meet the 'presence in New Zealand' and 'intention to continue to reside in New Zealand' requirements for a grant of citizenship. Mr Thiel considers he has exceptional circumstances that mean a grant is in the public interest.

General information

Mr Thiel and his agent have written to you concerning this application and a copy of their letters and your responses are at Tags A, B and C.

Presence in New Zealand

To meet this requirement, Mr Thiel must have been in New Zealand as a permanent resident for at least 1,350 days in the five years preceding this application. He does not meet this requirement because he was in New Zealand as a permanent resident for 12 days in those years. Mr Thiel has never lived in New Zealand.

Intention to continue to reside in New Zealand

To meet this requirement, Mr Thiel must intend to continue to reside in New Zealand or intend to work outside New Zealand for an approved organisation (e.g. a New Zealand business).

Mr Thiel lives in the U.S. He has stated that, if granted citizenship, he would continue to reside there to manage his American companies. Given Mr Thiel's current situation, the Department considers he is unable to meet the 'intention to continue to reside in New Zealand' requirement at this time.

Exceptional circumstances and public interest

You may grant Mr Thiel citizenship if satisfied he has exceptional circumstances that mean a grant would be in *the public interest*.

Mr Thiel considers his exceptional circumstances relate to his skill as an entrepreneur and his philanthropy. Public interest arises from Mr Thiel utilising his skills in New Zealand and on behalf of New Zealanders, and through his philanthropic activities in this country.

He has provided evidence to verify his skill set and has testimonials from noted New Zealand business and political figures attesting to the work he is doing in New Zealand.

Examples of his entrepreneurial skills include:

- Co-founding PayPal (a secure internet payment system)
- Investing in Facebook (he was the first outside investor)

In New Zealand he has established a venture capital fund to fund innovative companies. To date he has invested ██████████ into the online accounting business 'Xero' and made a ██████████ investment in Pacific Fibre Limited (a company which plans to lay a fibre-optic cable between New Zealand, Australia and the U.S. to improve broadband service). Through his representatives in this country Mr Thiel has discussed the establishment of a technology company incubator in Auckland and using his connections in San Francisco to help introduce New Zealand companies to the U.S. Further examples are provided in the body of this submission and in the tagged information.

Rod Drury (CEO and founder of Xero) and Sam Morgan (founder of Trade me, co-founder/chairman of Pacific Fibre and director of Fairfax Media) have written to the Department in support of Mr Thiel's application.

Mr Thiel has demonstrated his philanthropy through making a million dollar donation to the Christchurch earthquake relief fund.

Mr Thiel wishes to be granted citizenship from both a personal and professional perspective. Mr Thiel's entrepreneurial skills are what make him exceptional and this claim is supported by the success he has had in business, and further validated by the letters of support and additional documentation that accompanied his application. Mr Thiel states that being a New Zealand citizen would enable him to represent the country on the international stage and give him greater confidence in mobilising New Zealand's talented entrepreneurs.

When making your decision about this application you need to consider whether Mr Thiel's abilities as an entrepreneur and his work as a philanthropist are proof that he has exceptional circumstances and whether his use of these abilities is in the public interest.

When the investment Mr Thiel has made in New Zealand companies and the support and contacts he is able to provide, the Department is of the view that granting Mr Thiel citizenship would be in the public interest due to his exceptional circumstances.

Recommendation

- The Department recommends you **approve** Mr Peter Thiel's application for citizenship under section 9(1)(c) of the Citizenship Act 1977 (public interest due to exceptional circumstances).

Geoff May

Geoff May
for Secretary for Internal Affairs

Grant of citizenship **APPROVED**

Grant of citizenship **DECLINED**

Nathan Guy
Hon Nathan Guy
Minister of Internal Affairs

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT

Mr Peter Andreas Thiel

CRITERIA FOR THE GRANT OF CITIZENSHIP

This application is being considered under section 8 (citizenship by grant) and section 9 (grant of citizenship in special cases) of the Citizenship Act 1977. A copy of the relevant legislation is attached at Tag D.

Section 8(1) of the Citizenship Act provides that you may authorise the grant of New Zealand citizenship to any person who:

- a) has attained the age of 16 years; and
- b) is of full capacity; and
- c) satisfies you that he or she meets the six standard requirements listed below.

Requirements met

Mr Thiel, who has attained the age of 16 years and is of full capacity, clearly meets the following requirements:

- entitlement to reside in New Zealand indefinitely;
- good character;
- sufficient knowledge of the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship; and
- sufficient knowledge of the English language.

Requirements not met

Mr Thiel does not meet the following requirements:

- presence in New Zealand; and
- intention to continue to reside in New Zealand or to work for an approved organisation (e.g. a New Zealand company).

Presence in New Zealand

Mr Thiel first visited New Zealand in 1995 and has been to New Zealand four times. He was granted permanent residence on 24 July 2007. To meet the 'presence in New Zealand' requirement, Mr Thiel must have been in New Zealand as a permanent resident for at least 1,350 days in the five years preceding this application.

Mr Thiel does not meet this requirement because he was in New Zealand as a permanent resident for 12 days in those five years. He has never lived in New Zealand but has purchased a property in Parnell and has made an offer for the purchase of a holiday home in Queenstown. A calculation of his time in New Zealand as a permanent resident is at Tag E.

Accepting a shorter period of presence in New Zealand

You may accept a shorter period of 'presence in New Zealand' if satisfied Mr Thiel has exceptional circumstances and was in New Zealand as a permanent resident for at least 450 days of the 20 months before applying for citizenship.

Mr Thiel was in New Zealand as a permanent resident for 9 days in the 20-month period. Therefore his application cannot be considered under this provision.

Intention to continue to reside in New Zealand

To meet this requirement Mr Thiel must intend to continue to reside in New Zealand or intend to work outside New Zealand for an approved organisation (e.g. a New Zealand company).

Mr Thiel lives in the U.S. He has stated that, if granted citizenship, he would continue to reside there to manage his American companies. Given Mr Thiel's current situation, the Department considers he is unable to meet the 'intention to continue to reside in New Zealand' requirement at this time.

Exceptional circumstances and public interest

You may grant Mr Thiel citizenship if satisfied he has exceptional circumstances that mean a grant would be in the public interest.

His lawyer, [REDACTED] at Bell Gully, has written to the Department about Mr Thiel's circumstances (see Tag F). He has provided information to demonstrate that Mr Thiel is a 'world class' entrepreneur and a philanthropist. He has also provided testimonials from prominent New Zealand business figures who validate these claims.

Mr Thiel's credentials as an entrepreneur include founding Clarium (an American based investment management company), being a founder of PayPal (an e-commerce business allowing payments and money transfers to be made through the Internet), being an early investor in Facebook and establishing the Founders Fund (a capital fund that focuses on early-stage technology investments).

He has also set up a venture capital fund in New Zealand which seeks to fund innovative New Zealand companies, has invested [REDACTED] with Xero (an online accounting business) and in December 2010 he finalised a [REDACTED] investment in Pacific Fibre Limited (which plans to lay a fibre-optic cable between New Zealand, Australia and the U.S. to improve broadband service). In addition Mr Thiel has made a recent investment of [REDACTED] into Auckland-based Book Track Holdings Limited, which is developing a movie style sound track system for E-books.

[REDACTED] recently met Hon Dr Wayne Mapp, the Minister of Science and Technology, to discuss the possibility of setting up an 'IT Seed Centre Entrepreneurial Hub' that would offer scholarships to people with innovative ideas in

Information technology. Mr Thiel's representatives have also met with officials from the Ministry of Science and Innovation to discuss the establishment of an Auckland-based technology company incubator and setting up a 'landing pad' in San Francisco to help introduce New Zealand companies to the U.S.

As a world class entrepreneur Mr Thiel believes that with the right support New Zealand can achieve a place at the top of the world's list of best countries for entrepreneurs. Mr Thiel states that New Zealand is one of the best places in the world for establishing businesses. The New Zealand government's support of the New Zealand Venture Investment Fund shows a clear commitment of promoting innovation in New Zealand.

Mr Thiel has stated that through his global networks and connections he would promote New Zealand entrepreneurs and their products on the world stage and would be proud to do so.

██████████ has provided letters from Rod Drury (CEO and founder of Xero) and Sam Morgan (founder of Trade me, co-founder/chairman of Pacific Fibre and director of Fairfax Media) validating the skills and connections that Mr Thiel has (see Tag G). ██████████ has also advised that Mr Thiel consulted the Prime Minister and Cabinet members about how his company could contribute to the venture capital market in New Zealand.

██████████ is contending that Mr Thiel's entrepreneurial skills are what makes him exceptional and this claim is supported by the success he has had in business and further validated by the letters of support and additional documentation that accompanied his application. See Tag H.

The public interest in Mr Thiel's situation stems from him applying his skills in New Zealand through setting up a venture capital fund and investing in and providing assistance to New Zealand companies. He is also presenting at a conference in Auckland in July (along with the Prime Minister).

Mr Thiel has additional claims to having exceptional circumstances through his philanthropic work. ██████████ has stated that Mr Thiel has established the Thiel Foundation in the U.S., which supports a number of organisations which are dedicated to supporting the cause of freedom. His philanthropy has extended to New Zealand through his donation of one million New Zealand dollars to Christchurch Earthquake Fund, facilitated by Mark Weldon Chief Executive of NZX on behalf of the Prime Minister. This donation connects his exceptional circumstances (i.e. his generosity and philanthropy) to public interest.

Mr Thiel has stated that he wishes to be granted citizenship from both a personal and professional perspective. Mr Thiel's entrepreneurial skills are what makes him exceptional and this claim is supported by the success he has had in business and further validated by the letters of support and additional documentation that he has provided. He states that being a New Zealand citizen would enable him to represent this country on the international stage and give him greater confidence in mobilising New Zealand's talented entrepreneurs.

commendation

The Department recommends you **approve** Mr Thiel's application.

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