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Embassy/Swiss news

Successful Embassy road trip brings passport services closer to clients

For the first time, the Swiss Embassy has been able to offer passport services to Swiss citizens outside of Wellington. Consular officer Ariane Pochon travelled to Christchurch from 3-5 March 2013 and to Auckland from 6-12 March 2013 with a mobile biometric unit.

The huge demand and overwhelmingly positive feedback proved that this new service was well received by the Swiss community based in and around Christchurch and Auckland.

During nine days on the road, Ariane collected biometric data for Swiss passports and ID cards of 240 people, which is about 27 per day. To illustrate just how popular the service was, on average only one person comes in per day to the Embassy in Wellington to get a passport. Biometric data can be recorded all year long at the permanent biometric station based at the Embassy.

In order to accommodate as many customers as possible, Ariane extended her "mobile office hours" from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., and also opened her "mobile office" for two extra days over the weekend.

Nevertheless, demand exceeded supply and a few dozen customers (whose passport expiry dates, however, were still far off) unfortunately had to be turned away.

On a technical level, the mobile unit worked smoothly. The only minor disappointment was that a small number of customers did not show up

for their appointments, which means the slots were lost.

Given the very positive outcome of this pilot exercise, the Embassy has decided to again offer mobile passport services outside of Wellington in the future. The exact date the mobile biometric unit will return to New Zealand has not yet been finalized, but it will most probably only be in 2014. The Swiss Government has procured five mobile units which need to be shared by all Swiss representations around the world.

As mentioned in the Embassy's letter to registered Swiss citizens in New Zealand dated 24 January 2013, future communications including information on the next opportunity for mobile passport services outside Wellington will only be communicated by email (and posted on the Embassy's website: www.eda.admin.ch/wellington). In order to be certain you receive the information, please make sure the Embassy has your latest contact details including your email. To update your contact details a simple email to the Embassy (wel.vertretung@eda.admin.ch) or phone call (04 472 15 93) is enough. There is also an online form available on our website. www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/reps/ocea/vnzl/livnzl/addres.html.

By Flavio Milan, Deputy Head of Mission,
Embassy of Switzerland in Wellington

Cabinet stops short of regulating housing market

The Swiss Government has rejected proposals to limit higher rents on the housing market despite calls for affordable accommodation and complaints about a shortage of apartments as a result of increased immigration.

For further detail, please refer to:

<http://www.swissinfo.ch> (15 May 2013)

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