

Immigration Service allows refugee status claimants to record refugee claim interviews

Legislation	Ombudsmen Act 1975
Ombudsman	Anand Satyanand
Case number(s)	W36813
Date	1997

Refugee status claim—refusal to permit tape-recording of interview—practice based on need to preserve confidentiality and potential for recording to intimidate, unsettle or distract claimant—concerns not applicable where claimant requests recording—recording permitted

The complainant, who had claimed refugee status, wished to tape the interview with the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) because an interpreter would be involved, and it might be necessary to check the accuracy of the interpretation. The NZIS had earlier explained to the complainant that it was a longstanding practice not to permit the recording of refugee status interviews. This was due to the need to preserve the confidentiality of the interview and concerns that tape recording could intimidate, unsettle or distract the claimant.

Upon investigation, the NZIS advised that in general it was believed the interview system for refugee status claimants was working well. However, the NZIS agreed that the concerns about tape recording interviews were essentially for the protection of claimants, and there was no reason why claimants should not be permitted to tape record an interview if they wished. Accordingly, the NZIS practice was changed in this respect and the investigation was concluded on the basis that the complaint had been resolved.

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