



02 NOV 2017

Dear

On 4 October 2017, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *What are the security arrangements for clients present if an emergency safety incident should occur in any WNZ MSD office.?*
- *What are the security arrangements for clients present if an emergency safety incident should occur in the Whanganui office?*
- *Why are these important informations not made clear to clients in any way at all?*
- *What is the current average response time for client requests?*
- *What is the current average response time for client requests at the Whanganui office where the longer than a month issue occurred?*
- *Is there a targeted response time and if so what is that time frame?*
- *If there is a targeted time frame for responses to clients what percentages of responses fall within the time frame?*
- *What is being done to provided client responses in a reasonable (5 day period or less if an emergency) period?*
- *If nothing is being done to provide client responses in a reasonable period why is it not?*

If an emergency incident occurs in a Ministry office (including the Whanganui office), all managers, staff and guards on site are trained to manage the safety of the clients as well as their work colleagues and themselves. This may involve evacuating clients if it is safe to do so, or in the case of a site lockdown asking clients to follow reasonable instructions which may include accompanying staff to a safe zone.

Some clients may wish to leave a site during an incident and managers, staff and guards do not have the authority to detain them. On these occasions clients are advised of the risks involved in leaving the site at that time. If clients still wish to leave then their departure is managed as safely as possible so as not to endanger the client or other people. Site managers also check on clients after incidents to ensure that they do not require welfare assistance (appointments can sometimes be disrupted during an incident) and that they are feeling safe. Referrals to other agencies (e.g. Police) can be made if clients feel unsafe following an incident.

Managers, staff and guards are trained in how to manage emergency incidents. They also undertake practice drills to reinforce their learning about how to manage these types of incidents and about client experiences. As emergency incidents may vary in complexity at different sites they can require different types of responses and are not publicised to clients. This approach is consistent with other agencies and also serves to not unnecessarily heighten the fears of clients, many of whom are vulnerable when they visit Ministry sites.

Emails that indicate a client needs to be contacted or processing needs to be completed, whether received directly from the client or on behalf of the client via the Contact Centre, Ministry staff aim to action these within 24 hours.

Staff try to check for messages at least twice daily and return phone calls made within 24 hours of the message being left.

The Ministry does not formally measure or record compliance with these standards as it is difficult to accurately and consistently track the timeliness of responses to emails and voicemails. As such your request for the percentage of responses which fall within the targeted timeframe, the average response time to client requests nationally and at the Whanganui office is refused under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act as this information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and there are no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

Service Centre Managers have oversight of their site's email inbox and actively monitor this to support appropriate and timely responses to email communications. When a staff member is unexpectedly absent, the Service Centre Manager is also responsible for ensuring that their voicemail is updated to reflect this and that any work items requiring attention during the absence are managed by other staff.

Clients who have not received a timely response to their email or voicemail may raise their concerns directly with the Service Centre involved, or through the Contact Centre. Queries raised through the Contact Centre are escalated depending on the urgency of the situation, the length of time the client has been waiting for a response and the number of attempts made to resolve the issue. This may include ringing through to a Manager or the site phone at the Service Centre, emailing the site's shared inbox and the Service Centre Manager, contacting regional office, lodging a complaint, or referring the case to a Manager at the Contact Centre to liaise with the Service Centre.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

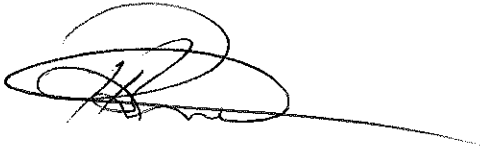
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding correspondence wait times and safety of clients at Ministry sites, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ruth Bound', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ruth Bound
Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery