



10 JUL 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

On 2 May 2018 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information regarding funding for New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) interpreter services.

On 16 May 2018 you further requested information regarding what other agencies provide funding for NZSL interpreting services, how much funding is provided, and how this funding is distributed.

The Ministry recognises the diverse needs of New Zealanders. As such, the Ministry endeavours to ensure that Work and Income sites are accessible to all clients. This includes the provision of NZSL interpreter services as required.

For the sake of clarity, I will address each of your questions in turn.

- *How much funding is given annually to Deaf Aotearoa/ Isign for the purpose of providing NZSL interpreter services to the Deaf community?*

Funding provided by the Ministry for NZSL interpreting services varies from year to year based on the needs of the Ministry's clients. Please note that this funding includes both interpreter services and translation services. In the 2016/2017 financial year, \$1,273,753.12 (excluding GST) was provided to Deaf Aotearoa for the provision of these services. Information regarding funding specifically for interpreter services is held on individual expense records. In order to provide this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of records. As such, your request for this information is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

Consideration has been given as to whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. In either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

- *Can you also please tell me how this funding is allocated? How is it decided what funds will be provided for interpreter services? Is it calculated on a certain number of hours for each deaf person? Or calculated on what was needed in previous years? Or is it just a random figure based on a budget? How is it calculated?*

Funding for interpreter services is provided as required to ensure that all clients who request an interpreter to attend an appointment or a job interview have access to one. No specific funding budget is set in advance, as the value required depends on the needs of the community.

- *Does any other interpreter service receive funding from the Ministry for NZSL interpreter services?*

In 2016, the Ministry recognised the need to develop a contract for the provision of NZSL translation and interpreter services. The Ministry of Social Development worked with the Ministries of Education, Health, and Justice to develop an agreed set of requirements. These agencies worked with the two national providers of NZSL services to provide input into the service required. In September 2017, contracts were signed with both Connect Interpreting and Deaf Aotearoa.

- *If I require an interpreter for an MSD appointment do I have a choice which interpreter service I use? Or does it have to be through Isign?*

Clients who require an interpreter for an appointment with the Ministry are able to request an interpreter of their choice from either Connect Interpreting or Deaf Aotearoa. The Ministry will work to find an available interpreter from the agency of the client's choice. Clients may also bring a support person, although please note that the Ministry will not meet any costs associated with the support person.

- *What ministries provide funding for NZSL interpreting purposes? How much funding is provided? Where is the funding distributed (please break down to what goes to what agencies and how much individual funding)?*

As per the answer to your first question, in the 2016/17 financial year, the Ministry provided \$1,273,753.12 to Deaf Aotearoa for translation and interpreter services. In addition to this, \$6,512.55 was provided to Connect Interpreting.

The Ministry of Social Development is aware of funding for NZSL interpreter services provided by the Ministries of Justice, Health, and Education. These agencies have been consulted in order to provide the information below.

The Ministry of Health funded Deaf Aotearoa for \$994,262.24 (excluding GST) during the 2016/17 financial year. This funding enables deaf clients to access public health and disability support services and information on equal terms as their peers. The Ministry of Health is currently conducting an annual service review of this contract. The Ministry of Health also contracted interpreters as needed, for example for meetings and events, for a total of \$4,680 (excluding GST) during the 2016/17 financial year. Funding may also be provided by District Health Boards, although I am advised that this is not centrally held by the Ministry of Health.

The Ministry of Education has advised that their financial systems do not separate funding for interpreter services for NZSL from that for other languages. As such, in order to identify this information, Ministry staff would have to manually check thousands of individual financial records. Your request for this information is therefore refused under section 18(f) of the Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

Consideration has been given to whether the Ministry would be able to provide a more complete response to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. In either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

Please note part of your request has been transferred to the Ministry of Justice so that they may provide a response regarding their funding of NZSL interpreter services.

Other government agencies may also provide funding for NZSL interpreter services, and the Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment (MBIE) holds a contract on behalf of several agencies for the Video Interpreting Service (VIS), in which you may be interested. More information regarding the VIS is available here: <http://nzvis.co.nz/>. The Ministries of Social Development, Health, and Education each provide \$80,000 to MBIE for this contract.

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 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 funding for NZSL interpreter services, 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



Anne Hawker
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