



19 July 2023

Tēnā koe

On 29 May 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

Please provide the following information, separately, in respect to both the Auckland and Waikato regions of MSD for the last 6-years, in respect to the following:

Personal grievances

- 1. The number of personal grievances raised by employees, year by year.*
- 2. The outcomes of those personal grievances, resolved, unresolved, still active.*
- 3. The amount paid in respect to "special leave" to the employees who had raised grievances and who were off work because of the grievances.*
- 4. The amount paid to external HR/employment advocates/consultants to investigate those personal grievances and the names of those organisations/individuals.*
- 5. The amount paid to external lawyers to investigate those personal grievances and the names of those organisations/individuals.*

Bullying complaints:

- 6. The number of bullying complaints, informal and formal, raised by employees, year by year.*
- 7. The outcomes of those bullying complaints, resolved, unresolved, still active.*
- 8. The amount paid in respect to "special leave" given to employees who had raised bullying complaints and who were off work because of the emotional, psychological & physiological harm caused by the bullying.*
- 9. The amount paid to external HR/employment advocates/consultants to investigate those bullying complaints and the names of those organisations/individuals.*

10. The amount paid to external lawyers to investigate those bullying complaints and the names of those organisations/individuals.

On 13 June 2023 the Ministry contacted you to advise more time was required to respond to your request. The reason for the extension was such that the consultations necessary to make a decision on your request could not reasonably be completed within the original timeframe.

On 18 July 2023 the Ministry notified you that a decision had been made to grant your request in part, however, more time was required to prepare the information for release.

The Ministry has around 8,800 employees (permanent and fixed-term) who provide income assistance and services to more than one million New Zealanders each year.

The Ministry take its obligations as an employer to provide a safe and healthy work environment very seriously. As such, the Ministry does not tolerate bullying, sexual harassment or assault. All Ministry staff, including managers, are required to read and sign the Code of Conduct

I will now respond to your questions in turn.

- 1. The number of personal grievances raised by employees, year by year.*
- 6. The number of bullying complaints, informal and formal, raised by employees, year by year.*

The number of personal grievances and bullying complaints raised by staff in Auckland and Waikato each year since 2017 is withheld under section 9(2)(a) to protect the privacy of Ministry staff. These numbers are low, and releasing this information is likely to risk identifying the individuals concerned.

In the spirit of being helpful, the **Table** below instead provides combined figures across the 6-year period. Please note, low numbers have still been suppressed as 'S' under section 9(2)(a) to protect the privacy of Ministry staff.

Table One: Total amounts of personal grievances and bullying complaints raised by Auckland and Waikato Ministry staff during the years 2017-2023.

Personal Grievances		Bullying Complaints		Total
Auckland	Waikato	Auckland	Waikato	
9	S	S	S	15

- 2. The outcomes of those personal grievances, resolved, unresolved, still active.*

7. *The outcomes of those bullying complaints, resolved, unresolved, still active.*

Of the 15 total personal grievances and bullying complaints, 10 have been resolved, with 5 still active.

3. *The amount paid in respect to "special leave" to the employees who had raised grievances and who were off work because of the grievances.*
4. *The amount paid to external HR/employment advocates/consultants to investigate those personal grievances and the names of those organisations/individuals.*
5. *The amount paid to external lawyers to investigate those personal grievances and the names of those organisations/individuals.*
8. *The amount paid in respect to "special leave" given to employees who had raised bullying complaints and who were off work because of the emotional, psychological & physiological harm caused by the bullying.*
9. *The amount paid to external HR/employment advocates/consultants to investigate those bullying complaints and the names of those organisations/individuals.*
10. *The amount paid to external lawyers to investigate those bullying complaints and the names of those organisations/individuals.*

These questions are refused under section 18(f) of the Act as substantial manual collation would be required to provide you with this information as it is not held in a format that is readily retrievable.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

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. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry'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 personal grievances and bullying complaints, 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.

Ngā mihi nui

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rob Gold', written over a light blue grid background.

Rob Gold
Group General Manager (Acting)
People