



31 OCT 2018



Dear 

On 3 October 2018, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information regarding correspondence responded to by the Ministry. On 4 October 2018, your request was clarified as below:

- *The types and number of correspondence received, for the past three financial years in quarterly figures.* – You are looking for information about Written Parliamentary Questions, Official Information Act requests, and Correspondence, the latter two broken down by Ministerial and Chief Executive/agency responses.
- *Numbers of staff required to handle these requests, for the past three financial years in quarterly figures.* – You are only interested in the staff directly involved in preparing the responses to these requests (i.e. not including people whose main job is not doing this, but may provide subject matter expertise where required).
- *Any structural changes required to deal with the volume of requests*
- *Comment on the reasons for changes in the rate of requests*

The Ministry is one of New Zealand's largest public service departments and provides services to more than one million New Zealanders each year. The Ministry's Ministerial and Executive Services Group supports and assists Ministers and their offices along with the Ministry's Leadership Team and staff when responding to interest in the Ministry's work. Its key role is to ensure accountability and transparency of the Ministry and to accurately convey Ministry information to the public in a timely manner. The Ministerial and Executive Services Group includes two teams provide this support, as follows:

- The Correspondence team is responsible predominantly for drafting replies to Ministerial and Chief Executive Correspondence, and for the records management of information to and from the Ministry and the Ministers' offices.
- The Official and Parliamentary Information team is responsible for responding to requests made under the Official Information Act 1982 and drafting replies to written parliamentary questions.

Other staff members within the Ministry may respond to correspondence and Official Information Act requests on an ad-hoc basis, for instance Service Centre staff in the regions, and the Ministry's Media team. For the purposes of this request these events and staff have not been counted.

The table below shows the number of written parliamentary questions that Ministerial and Executive Services provided a proposed response to, broken down by financial year.

Financial year	Written parliamentary questions
2015/2016	1829
2016/2017	1477
2017/2018	1467
Total	4773

The table below shows the number of Official Information Act requests that Ministerial and Executive Services responded to or provided a proposed response for, broken down by financial year and response type.

Financial year	Chief Executive responses provided	Proposed Ministerial responses provided	Total Official information Act responses
2015/2016	569	84	653
2016/2017	511	103	614
2017/2018	462	71	533
Total	1542	258	1,800

The table below shows the number of pieces of correspondence that Ministerial and Executive Services responded to or provided a proposed response for, broken down by financial year and response type.

Financial year	Chief Executive responses provided	Proposed Ministerial responses provided	Total correspondence responses
2015/2016	1,083	1,247	2,330
2016/2017	1,042	1,220	2,262
2017/2018	1,151	1,096	2,247
Total	3,276	3,563	6,839

The table below shows the number of Ministerial and Executive Services Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff in the Correspondence Team and the Official and Parliamentary Information Team, including administrators and managers as at 30 June for each of the past three financial years. Please note that as at 30 June 2017, there was a short period of overlap between staff who were leaving the team and staff who were starting in the team.

Financial year	FTE
2015/2016	19.8
2016/2017	23.0
2017/2018	20.0

Ministerial and Executive Services has not undergone any structural changes to deal with the volume of requests in the past three years.

On 1 April 2017, Oranga Tamariki – The Ministry for Children was established. The responsibility for providing proposed responses to written parliamentary questions, and responding to Official Information Act requests and pieces of correspondence relating to children in state care was transferred to Oranga Tamariki. Between 1 April 2017 and 30 June 2017, the Ministry provided transitional services to Oranga Tamariki. When the transition was complete, the decrease in Ministerial and Executive Services work that the Ministry was responsible for was offset to a degree by an increased public interest in social and emergency housing.

It is also important to note that a count of requests and pieces of correspondence responded to does not necessarily represent the workload of the Ministerial and Executive Services Team. In the past few years there has been a qualitative change in the type of Official Information Act requests received by the Ministry and its associated Ministers, with a shift to requests for large numbers of documents, and detailed requests with multiple questions. Additionally, these staff undertake other duties as part of their roles, including providing training, and assisting in the proactive release of information.

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

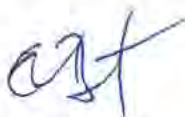
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

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, 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



Elisabeth Brunt
General Manager, Ministerial and Executive Services