



07 AUG 2020

Tēnā koe

On 19 July 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information in relation to the Act:

- *The number of Official Information Act requests received in the last financial year*
- *The number of requests in the last financial year for which a charge was demanded, if available*
- *The number of requests in the last financial year for which a charge was paid, if available*
- *The total amount received in charges for Official Information Act requests in the last financial year. This should be available from your financial systems. If it is not available, I would like an explanation why?*

As you are aware, the Act reflects the democratic principles of New Zealand Government. It was designed to progressively increase the availability of official information and to:

- increase public interest and understanding of the processes of Government, and promote public participation in the making of laws and policy
- promote transparent Government and the accountability of Ministers of the Crown and Government officials
- protect official information to the extent consistent with both the public interest and personal privacy.

The Ministry employs over 7,000 staff to provide services to over one million New Zealanders each year. The Ministry's Ministerial and Executive Services team supports and assists Ministers, the Ministry's Leadership Team and staff when responding to public interest regarding its work. The key role of the Act is to ensure accountability and transparency of the Ministry and to accurately convey Ministry information to the public in a timely manner.

I can advise that the Ministry responded to 698 Official Information Act requests made to its Chief Executive in the 2019/2020 financial year.

It is not the Ministry's policy to charge for official information. In exceptional circumstances, charges may be invoked according to current legislation and after

consideration of relevant factors has been made, including public interest in the information and whether the requestor will be able to pay the charge.

The Ministry does not employ cost recovery, but instead uses the guidelines for charging set out by the Ministry of Justice, which state that: "time spent by staff searching for relevant material, abstracting and collating, copying, transcribing and supervising access where the total time involved is in excess of one hour should be charged as follows, after the first hour: an initial charge of \$38 for the first chargeable half hour or part thereof; and then \$38 for each additional half hour or part thereof."

The Ministry of Justice Charging Guidelines for Official Information Act 1982 Requests (the charging guidelines) can be accessed from the Ministry of Justice website here: www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/1982-Official-Information-Act-charging-guidelines.pdf.

In some cases where the Ministry decides to charge for information, it may seek to make the charge as equitable as possible; for example, offering a reduction if it is likely to cause the requestor financial hardship.

In the 2019/2020 financial year, the Ministry elected to charge, and received a payment for official information on one occasion. Under an exceptional circumstance, where it was deemed that the information publicly available online already met public interest and substantial manual collation would be required to prepare the information requested, the Ministry offered to provide the information requested at a reasonable charge set in accordance with the charging guidelines and under sections 15(1A) and 15(2) of the Act.

I can advise that the total amount paid by the requester was \$456 (GST inclusive).

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 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 Official Information Act requests in the last financial year, 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.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'K' followed by a long horizontal line.

Kate Satterthwaite
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services