



19 JAN 2021

On 7 December 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *How many times in the last 3 years has iSign not been able to provide a NZSL interpreter when requested?*
- *How many times has connect interpreting been approached to provide an interpreter when iSign could not provide one?*
- *How does MSD determine if the NZSL interpreter is qualified? Do they check on the NZSL register? Or do they accept that iSign is providing qualified NZSL interpreters when requested?*

iSign is a private company that provides qualified New Zealand Sign Language interpreters (NZSL interpreters). iSign work hard to ensure that an appropriate NZSL interpreter is provided for each individual job. This includes considering the job location, type of job, any preferences or requirements of the deaf persons/hearing impaired, and the iSign interpreter's experience and availability.

iSign is a company that the Ministry contracts, and client centre staff assist clients to book an interpreter through iSign's online booking system. The Ministry does not have access to their company records, and therefore cannot identify how many times iSign has not be able to provide a NZSL interpreter. As this information is not held by the Ministry, it is refused under section 18(g)(i) of the Act, as the Ministry has no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department, Minister of the Crown, organisation or by a local authority. This information is likely to be held by iSign, however as they are a private company, they are not subject to the Act.

In regard to your second question, the Ministry cannot confirm how many times Connect Interpreting Limited (Connect Interpreting) has been approached due to iSign not being available. However, from 1 January 2017 to 14 December 2020, Connect Interpreting has been approached 172 times by the Ministry to assist with a NZSL interpreter for clients that are deaf or hearing impaired and require an interpreter to proceed with their appointments.

The Ministry has a detailed contract with both iSign and Connect Interpreting to ensure that the best interpreters possible are provided. Each interpreter must go through a

police check, and they must be a suitably qualified, competent and professional NZSL interpreter to attend any requested appointment.

All interpreters that the Ministry contract through iSign and Connect Interpreting to assist clients must be qualified and be full ordinary members of the Sign Language Interpreters Association of New Zealand.

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

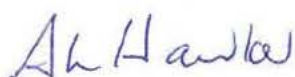
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

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. 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 relating to NZSL interpreters, 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.

Your sincerely



Anne Hawker
Principal Disability Advisor