



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

26 MAR 2021

Tēnā koe

On 15 February 2021, you emailed the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- 1. What is the legal entity for Homecare Medical (New Zealand) Limited, which appears as a company, but is not listed on the companies office? Is the data held here in New Zealand or is it held overseas?*
- 2. Once beneficiaries enter in their personal WINZ number on the 0800 559 009 line, advertising which promotes the user to access services at Puāwaitanga and clearly states that 'this is not part of Work and Income' - what is the justification is this privately owned company being promoted to users of the 0800 599 009?*

On 5 March 2021, SFO transferred part of your request to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) pursuant to section 14(b)(ii) of the Act, as the information to which your request relates is believed to be more closely connected with the functions of the Ministry. The Ministry will be responding to the following part of your request:

*Once beneficiaries enter in their personal WINZ number on the 0800 559 009 line, advertising which promotes the user to access services at Puāwaitanga and clearly states that 'this is not part of Work and Income' - what is the justification is this privately owned company being promoted to users of the 0800 599 009?*

The Ministry contracts many specialised service providers, such as Homecare Medical, to partner for greater impact and outcomes. The Ministry works with Homecare Medical, who run the national telehealth services, to offer virtual health and wellbeing services to New Zealanders including Puāwaitanga.

Puāwaitanga is a free, voluntary, phone and online counselling service available to anybody on a main benefit or at risk of coming on to benefit. It is provided by qualified and registered counsellors. People can self-refer themselves to the service by calling the self-referral number **0800 782 999**.

People calling the Ministry's Contact Centres are currently played an introduction message about Puāwaitanga through the interactive voice response messaging system. This is the main way the Ministry lets people know about the self-referral pathway. The Ministry made this change after clients told us that they would prefer to make contact with the service directly. Clients who self-refer are also more likely to successfully engage with the service, compared to being referred via a Case Manager.

The Puāwaitanga message that you are referring to initially plays at the 6-minute mark in the wait time and is repeated later depending on how long a caller is on hold for. It is played to everyone, not just Ministry clients, who ring through to the Work and Income line. It does not target those who enter their SWN numbers.

Because the service is clinical, it is important that the Ministry ensures clients understand it is separate from the Ministry and the service is completely private and confidential. The Ministry also reminds clients that it is separate from the Ministry to stop clients from ringing Homecare Medical and asking for Ministry support, such as food grants or hardship assistance.

If you have concerns or feedback about a service provided by the Ministry you can provide this information on the online form available from the Ministry's website here: <https://msd.govt.nz/form/msd/govt/nz/form.req2?requestType=msd-govt-nz-select-form-v1>.

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
- 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 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](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding the promotion of Puāwaitanga on the Work and Income line, 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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Nā mātou noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jayne Russell', written over a faint circular stamp or watermark.

Jayne Russell  
**Group General Manager**  
**Employment**