



10 August 2022

Tēnā koe

On 13 July 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Please advise me of steps MSD has taken to ensure the dignity and respect of transgender clients, including staff training guidelines, policies around changing clients' gender markers and the honorifics used in communications from the ministry, and copies of the minutes from meetings that include the keywords "transgender", "gender diverse", or "gender diversity", "gender marker".*

The Ministry seeks to be respectful and inclusive of all our clients. The Ministry uses its Client Management System (CMS) to manage and maintain information regarding clients. The CMS guide for Customer Service Representatives within the Ministry advises staff of the following when changing a client or child's gender within CMS.

The Ministry has three options to record a client's or child's gender: Female, Gender Diverse or Male. In the same way that ethnicity is self-identified, clients can choose the gender option they identify with most. It does not need to match the gender displayed on their government issued identification. The gender option they choose is what the Ministry uses when addressing them, writing to them and when providing services.

A client can self-declare a change to their gender verbally or in writing. The client does not need to provide any verification to support this change. When a client changes their gender, they may also change their preferred name and/or title at the same time. The Ministry can record the name a person prefers to be known by and this does not need to match government ID.

Clients can also change their preferred name at any time independent from changing their gender. Caregivers can ask the Ministry to change the gender information for any children in their care. Clients who have legally changed

their gender may choose to supply the Ministry with a new birth certificate, but they are not required to do so.

Staff at the Ministry are encouraged to ask clients for their pronouns if they have asked to change their gender. If they provide one, it is suggested the staff member leave a 'Must View Note' to advise other staff of the correct pronouns to use in future engagements with the client.

Additionally, staff are advised to use the gender specified by the client if there are documents with differing information. If the correct gender and pronouns to use are still unclear, it is suggested that the staff member clarify with the client.

The Ministry provides resources to staff regarding gender diversity. Please see attached a copy of the Ministry's guidance to staff for making engagements with clients positive, respectful, and inclusive as **Appendix A**.

In order to review copies of meeting minutes to determine whether the requested words or phrases were included, the Ministry would need to divert thousands of personnel from their core duties and allocate extra time to complete this task. The diversion of these resources would impair the Ministry's ability to continue standard operations and would be an inefficient use of the Ministry's resources. As such, your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, requires substantial collation. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your requests 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 and attachments 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, 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 black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Stenhouse', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tony Stenhouse

Director

Culture and Inclusion / Learning and Capability