



27 June 2022

Tēnā koe

On 10 May 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *I kindly request under the Official Information Act the following information:*
 - *The last twenty Official Information Act responses from the Ministry.*
 - *The total amount of hours spent by Ministry staff on processing OIA responses in the month of April.*
 - *Any internal guidelines and/or policies regarding the Ministry's handling of OIA requests/obligations under the Act.*

On 8 June 2022, the Ministry emailed you to advise that more time was required to prepare the information you requested for release and will be sent to you no later than 28 June 2022.

For clarity, the Ministry will respond to each of your questions in turn.

1. *The last twenty Official Information Act responses from the Ministry.*

The Ministry publishes most of our responses to Official Information Act (OIA) requests on our website. You will find those published responses at this link: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/official-information-responses/responses-to-official-information-act-requests.html.

Your request for this information is refused under section 18(d) of the Act on the basis that the information requested will soon be publicly available. This information will be published as soon as reasonably possible.

2. *The total amount of hours spent by Ministry staff on processing OIA responses in the month of April.*

The Ministry's Ministerial and Executive Services (MaES) team supports and assists Ministers, the Ministry's Leadership Team and staff when responding to public interest in the Ministry's work. Its key role is to ensure accountability and transparency of the Ministry and accurately convey Ministry information to the public in a timely manner.

The Ministry has a centralised system for the management of OIA requests. The Ministry tracks and reports on the timeliness of the replies.

I am unable to provide you with the number of hours spent by Ministry staff on processing OIA responses in the month of April 2022. Part of the MaES team is the Official and Parliamentary Information (OPI) team, whose core role is to manage and respond to requests received under the Act. However, the actual total hours spent on OIA requests is impossible to quantify, as multiple business units across the Ministry are often involved in the process of compiling a response, and the time that staff in those business units spent on OIA requests is not recorded.

Therefore, I am refusing your request under section 18(g)(i) of the Act as the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

Please note that this refusal ground differs from that cited in the Notification of Decision issued to you on 8 June 2022. At the time it was believed that it would be possible to collate the information you requested but that this collation would be a substantial manual collation exercise, and that section 18(f) of the Act was applicable. However, as outlined above, we have since then concluded that this information does not exist as the hours of staff are not recorded.

In the spirit of being helpful, I can inform you that there were **13** staff (full-time equivalent) in the OPI team as at 30 April 2022.

3. *Any internal guidelines and/or policies regarding the Ministry's handling of OIA requests/obligations under the Act.*

The Ministry utilises the Ombudsman's guide to processing and handling OIA requests. The Ministry is governed by the Act, and therefore carries the same obligations when handling and responding to an OIA request as the Ministers and other agencies. You can find more information about the Ombudsman's guide at this link: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/resources/oia-ministers-and-agencies-guide-processing-official-information-requests.

The Ministry is regularly reviewing, improving and updating our internal processing manual for OIA requests and responses. Please find enclosed as **Appendix A** the section of the *Ministerial and Executive Services Processing Manual* relevant to processing OIA requests.

Additionally, you will find enclosed 'Releasing information under the OIA' as **Appendix B**, as well as 'OIA release of staff names assessment guidelines and form' as **Appendix C**. These two documents were excerpted from the Ministry's intranet portal, Doogle.

Please note internal guidance documents are also frequently reviewed and updated. You may be interested in the *OIAs involving Ministers guide* which you can find on the following link: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/official-information-responses/index.html.

The principles and purposes of the Act 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 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 the Ministry's response to Official Information Act requests, 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 blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Short', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

pp.

Stephanie Short

Manager

Official and Parliamentary Information