



13 November 2024

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 18 October 2024 requesting all information, including correspondence, provided to Ministers regarding the proposal to close Alliance Group's Smithfield site.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision on your request set out below.

The following appendices in scope are released to you:

- **Appendix One** – Updates to Hon Louise Upston's Office – containing two email chains dated 27 September 2024 and 18 October 2024.
- **Appendix Two** – Social Development and Employment Update (SDEU) – 11 October 2024

You will note that some information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

Some information is also withheld under section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act to protect the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions. I believe the greater public interest is in the ability of individuals to express opinions in the course of their duty.

Some information in **Appendix Two** is marked as out of scope as it is not relevant to the Alliance Group's Smithfield site.

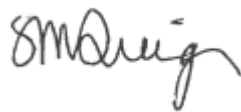
I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

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 my decision on your request, 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

pp.



Magnus O'Neill

**General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services**

Jess Ballard

From: Natasha Hopkins
Sent: Friday, 27 September 2024 2:59 pm
To: s9(2)(a) @parliament.govt.nz
Cc: Service_Delivery_DCE_Office (MSD); i_request (MSD)
Subject: FW: holding lines

IN-CONFIDENCE

Hi Ailee,

- **Our** Regional Labour Market Manager reached out to the CEO and General Manager, People & Culture from Alliance Smithfield Plant this morning
- **The** General Manager, People & Culture called our Regional Labour Market Manager and we've provided them with an overview of what employment and income supports MSD delivers (i.e., joint seminars on financial and job search support alongside IRD, engaging with employers in similar industries regarding their vacancies, pre-employment support with CV's and job interviews, 1:1 support etc).
- Alliance Smithfield Plant advised that:
 - There will be a two-week consultation period on the closure proposal
 - There will be a staff meeting planned for Friday 18 October to advise of the decision
 - Alliance have provided staff with a dedicated EAP phone line, information on local support agencies, and an email address to send feedback to
 - 600 staff employed at Smithfield – 50 of these are ancillary staff (supervisors, maintenance, trades, management)
- Alliance Smithfield Plant have advised that they will reach back out to MSD next week to discuss what support would be required

Regards,

Tash

From: Ailee Gray <s9(2)(a) @parliament.govt.nz>
Sent: Friday, 27 September 2024 11:45:16 am (UTC+12:00) Auckland, Wellington
To: Destiny Moses <s9(2)(a) @msd.govt.nz>; Hugh Miller <s9(2)(a) @msd.govt.nz>; Kamal Acharya <s9(2)(a) @msd.govt.nz>; Jayne Russell <s9(2)(a) @msd.govt.nz>
Cc: Service_Delivery_DCE_Office (MSD) <Service_Delivery_DCE_Office@msd.govt.nz>; Viv Rickard <s9(2)(a) @msd.govt.nz>; Emma Hamilton <s9(2)(a) @msd.govt.nz>; Ben Murray <s9(2)(a) @msd.govt.nz>; Aaron Orr <s9(2)(a) @msd.govt.nz>; Jamie Robinson <s9(2)(a) @msd.govt.nz>
Subject: RE: holding lines

Hey fam

Sooooo now the announcement has happened, can I please commission another update due 3pm. This update just needs to cover off any further engagement with the employer following the announcement and the planning that our Early Response teams are now doing as a result.

Thanks heaps

A

From: Destiny Moses <[redacted]@msd.govt.nz>
Sent: Thursday, September 26, 2024 5:02 PM
To: Ailee Gray <[redacted]@parliament.govt.nz>; Hugh Miller <[redacted]@msd.govt.nz>; Kamal Acharya <[redacted]@msd.govt.nz>; Jayne Russell <[redacted]@msd.govt.nz>
Cc: Service_Delivery_DCE_Office (MSD) <Service_Delivery_DCE_Office@msd.govt.nz>; Viv Rickard <[redacted]@msd.govt.nz>; Emma Hamilton <[redacted]@msd.govt.nz>; Ben Murray <[redacted]@msd.govt.nz>; Aaron Orr <[redacted]@msd.govt.nz>; Jamie Robinson <[redacted]@msd.govt.nz>
Subject: RE: holding lines

IN-CONFIDENCE

Kia Ora Ailee

Please see attached the second update for this:

- First Page: Alliance Smithfield Plant (ASP) specific info.
- Second page: General examples of support for seasonal employees.

Sing out if you had any questions, thank you 😊

From: Ailee Gray <[redacted]@parliament.govt.nz>
Sent: Thursday, September 26, 2024 12:21 PM
To: Destiny Moses <[redacted]@msd.govt.nz>; Hugh Miller <[redacted]@msd.govt.nz>; Kamal Acharya <[redacted]@msd.govt.nz>; Jayne Russell <[redacted]@msd.govt.nz>
Cc: Service_Delivery_DCE_Office (MSD) <Service_Delivery_DCE_Office@msd.govt.nz>; Viv Rickard <[redacted]@msd.govt.nz>
Subject: RE: holding lines

Thanks so much team.

I amended the lines about seasonal closure v plant closure – on this though... are the region able to tell us when the plant would have closed for the season?

Can you also send me through examples of where seasonal employees go/their next step when their employment finishes for the season? Generally speaking – not specific to this employer.

Keen to see the next update later today and where you get to with MSD vacancies in the area and more details of affected employees.

Thanks!

A

From: Destiny Moses <§9(2)(a)@msd.govt.nz>

Sent: Thursday, September 26, 2024 11:52 AM

To: Ailee Gray <§9(2)(a)@parliament.govt.nz>

Cc: Service_Delivery_DCE_Office (MSD) <Service_Delivery_DCE_Office@msd.govt.nz>; Viv Rickard <§9(2)(a)@msd.govt.nz>; Hugh Miller <§9(2)(a)@msd.govt.nz>; Jayne Russell <§9(2)(a)@msd.govt.nz>; Kamal Acharya <§9(2)(a)@msd.govt.nz>

Subject: RE: holding lines

IN-CONFIDENCE

Hi Ailee

Please see below:

Southern region engagement with employer:

- Employer advised MSD of the intent of a seasonal closure on the 20/09.
- We have been advised by Alliance Smithfield ovine chain will finish on 25/09 Sept and the rest of the other departments will close 26/9.
- There will be around 300 FTE finishing for end of season at Smithfield. Important to note that this is a **full plant closure is a seasonal closure (early) not a plant closure**.

What we know about the employees, including numbers, whether they are full-time perm or seasonal/migrant etc

- We know there are migrant workers but are unsure of the split/make up of that, we'll work to get this detail from employee/HR and will update you one we know more

Our Early Response Team on the ground and immediate next steps we are planning following any potential announcements

- ERT team have engaged with HR with a plan to offer redeployment seminars and follow up 1:1

MSD Vacancies

- *We will have this info to you later today.*

Reactive lines to support

- We know this is a really difficult time for everyone affected by the closure, our staff are here to help.
- Getting New Zealanders into jobs is a key priority for us. Our Labour Market and Employment teams have strong relationships in the region.
- We have range of roles available across the South Canterbury, Otago and Southland regions, on our books with employers who are keen to hire. We will continue to work with those who need our assistance in the coming days.
- For those facing redundancy we have help available to look for new jobs, and income support for those who are eligible until other work can be found.

An overview of what our Early Response team does/how they operate

- The Early Response Redeployment Support service (ERRS) works closely with employers and people facing redundancy to enable the employer to redeploy and/or retrain their employees, or to support workers to transition to a new job or training opportunities.
- ERRS makes use of local knowledge about the jobs available and services in the community that can help people get through changes in their work situation and get a new job.
- The service provides an opportunity to support this cohort of people by helping them to:
 - retain their employment
 - transition to suitable and appropriate employment
 - access upskilling opportunities with the use of MSD products and Redeployment Support Service (tailored to people's needs).

For Further information about Work and Income financial support, clients can:

Call 0800 559 009 for general enquiries.

Register for the MyMSD online service: <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/online-services/mymsd/>

Check out the online guide: [Check what you might get \(msd.govt.nz\)](#)

Visit a local Service Centre.

Thanks

Destiny

From: Kamal Acharya <s9(2)(a)@msd.govt.nz>
Sent: Thursday, September 26, 2024 10:52 AM
To: Destiny Moses <s9(2)(a)@msd.govt.nz>
Cc: Service_Delivery_DCE_Office (MSD) <Service_Delivery_DCE_Office@msd.govt.nz>
Subject: FW: holding lines
Importance: High

IN-CONFIDENCE

As discussed 😊

From: Ailee Gray <s9(2)(a)@parliament.govt.nz>
Sent: Thursday, September 26, 2024 10:51 AM
To: Kamal Acharya <s9(2)(a)@msd.govt.nz>
Cc: Dean Shelley <s9(2)(a)@parliament.govt.nz>
Subject: holding lines
Importance: High

Hey – further to our phone chat... could you please send me through some high level lines by 11.30am at the latest about:

- Any interaction Southern region have had with the employer
- What we know about the employees, including numbers, whether they are full-time perm or seasonal etc
- Our Early Response Team on the ground and immediate next steps we are planning following any potential announcements
- Anything else that could be useful for our office and PMO to know

Including Dean as he is getting some JS data for the area

Thank you thank you thank you

Ailee Gray

Private Secretary – Social Development | Office of Hon Louise Upston
Minister for Social Development and Employment
Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector
Minister for Child Poverty Reduction
Minister for Disability Issues



Mobile: s9(2)(a)
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RELEASED UNDER THE OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT

Alliance Smithfield Plant (ASP) – Specific

Alliance Smithfield Plant (ASP) is located in Timaru in the South Island of New Zealand – they process sheep and deer. There are two main parts to the business (often referred to as the 'plant'), the Meat production itself and the local sales/retail side. The plant operates seasonally, offering day and night shifts.

Note: The Southern regional meat processing plants have been impacted by a severe drought in North Otago this year which has significantly limited stock availability, stock size and feed supply for next year. Reduced demand for red meat globally has also impacted prices offered for stock. s9(2)(g)(i)

When would the plant usually have closed for the season?

- MSD region was aware that the season for ASP was finishing on the **26th of September** and had BAU support in place to support this.
- However, as mentioned below – MSD region only became aware today that this may in fact be a full business closure (possible official announcement tomorrow)

Note: Earlier in April 2024 ASP laid off a product processing chain months earlier than expected, citing weather conditions and stock shortages as the reason. Between 150-180 staff were impacted; however, some were able to move to other product processing chains at ASP or secured alternative employment elsewhere.

More about those impacted by the closure?

In previous discussions with the employer, we understand there may be approximately:

- 334* people affected by this closure
- s9(2)(a) – who may have been part of the earlier seasonal layoffs in April.

**These figures are subject to change. They also do not include HR/Admin/Finance and maintenance staff. All numbers/analysis are still to be determined.*

MSD vacancies

As of 25 September 2024:

- Timaru and Oamaru have approximately 11 Vacancies listed and 21 positions listed.
- Ashburton site has 7 vacancies listed and 29 positions listed
- Dunedin has 31 vacancies listed and 51 positions listed.

General

Examples of where seasonal employees go/their next step when their employment finishes for the season? Generally speaking – not specific to this employer.

Where possible, MSD works to connect clients from one seasonal opportunity to another or use their experience and upskilling to support them into permanent employment opportunities. There can be mixed success in this space, as this is dependent on the demands of the labour market, the needs of employers and the skill sets of clients.

MSD and the sector work together in seasonal markets to strengthen relationships between employers to support jobs and skills matching with Jobseekers. We have long-standing relationships with many seasonal employers and MSD is mature in its operations within those labour markets working to regional based workforce plans.

In seasonal industries such as **Freezing works**:

As an example, when a freezing works business has a seasonal layoff, this can range from weeks to months – MSD works with people to bridge the gap or find alternative employment. Regional support can also include assessing eligibility for income support, for example Emergency Benefit.

These types of businesses are often located in small communities and alternative employment can be limited.

In other seasonal industries such as **Horticulture and Viticulture**:

This type of seasonal work makes up a significant proportion of regular employment opportunities for many of our regions.

To support people into opportunities within **horticulture and viticulture** - MSD can use our New Zealand Seasonal Work Scheme* (NZSWS).

- This can help cover support costs, accommodation costs and incentive payments for the duration of the work, a minimum of six weeks, working 30 hours a week.

A significant proportion of people who take up seasonal work in these industries don't return to benefit. For more permanent employment opportunities MSD is also able to use assess eligibility to other wage subsidies.

** Must meet eligibility criteria + role must be within horticulture and viticulture to qualify for this support or unable to work due to adverse weather conditions.*

Some examples:

- Recently in the Bay of Plenty, MSD was able to connect workers who had seasonal work in kiwifruit packhouses to other contractors, building on the skills they learnt to continue to work with the contractor. In one success story, an MSD client has been promoted into a supervisory role with the contractor.
- There are other good examples in the South Island where MSD has been supporting clients to find flexible and long-term jobs. For example, a group of orchard workers in Otago who were supported by the New Zealand Seasonal Work Scheme in its first year now all have fulltime work in the industry. There is also an example of a seasonal worker supported by the scheme who has progressed to orchard manager in that region. If employers identify additional skills needed, we can help them get those as well.

Jess Ballard

From: Destiny Moses
Sent: Friday, 18 October 2024 11:00 am
To: s9(2)(a) @parliament.govt.nz
Cc: i_request (MSD); Service_Delivery_DCE_Office (MSD)
Subject: FYI: Alliance closure - update
Attachments: Alliance Smithfield plant - update as at 18.10.docx

IN-CONFIDENCE

Morning Ailee

Following the announcement of the Alliance closure this morning:

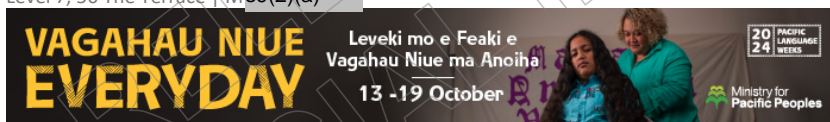
- [Hundreds of job losses confirmed in Timaru meatworks closure | The Press \(stuff.co.nz\)](#)

Please see attached an update of MSD actions, support, and planned events for this closure. We'll be refining and support over the coming weeks and will provide an update via SDEU.

Let me know if you need any other info 😊

Thanks
Destiny

Destiny Moses-Va | Deputy Chief Executive Advisor | DCE Office - Service Delivery
Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora | Ministry of Social Development
Level 7, 56 The Terrace | Ms9(2)(a)



Alliance Smithfield plant

At the end of September, Alliance announced the proposed closure of the Smithfield plant, Timaru, impacting 600 meatworkers and ancillary staff. **A final decision on closure has been made today 18/10 at 9am.**

Early Response Teams are proactively engaging with staff through drop-in sessions, providing job search support and advice. MSD will continue to refine our support alongside Te Puni Kōkiri, Workbridge, Y South, ARA, APM Workcare, and other partners who are also offering support to the affected workers.

MSD Support

- **Early Response:** Our regional staff (Early Response) have been working with Alliance since the beginning of September to understand the impact.
- **MSD info:** MSD has provided Alliance with a full redeployment/redundancy pack for inclusion in employee packs they want to have ready if the company decision is to close. This pack includes information from MSD and IRD about redundancy payments and employment support for South Canterbury.
- **Drop-In sessions & CV seminars:** Based on demand from Smithfield workers coming into the MSD Timaru site - sessions ran from 3-17 October. Additional sessions will be scheduled from the week beginning 21 October through until the end of year to cater for all employees including ancillary staff and those finishing venison processing.

The region has been actively planning additional events in anticipation of the potential closure of Alliance. We will now move forward with these plans and provide an update through SDEU:

<p>MSD/IRD joint redundancy seminars</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 and 31 October and 1 November - Seminars will run. <p>Four sessions daily for up to 50 people at each session At Caroline Bay Hall for workers immediately affected by closure; with more planned for the ancillary and venison plant workers from late-November.</p> <p>MSD & IRD staff are available after each session to chat to workers about their particular situations. A link to a webinar can be provided for those not able to attend a face-to-face seminar.</p>
<p>Mini jobs fair in conjunction with Venture Timaru and Chamber of Commerce.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday 5 November from 2pm-7pm. <p>A mini expo for up to 40 food manufacturers, seasonal employers, and any businesses keen to pick up Smithfield workers has been tentatively booked to cater for both staff who've already finished for the season, and those continuing on the venison chain and ancillary staff supporting them.</p> <p><i>(Note: MSD region are aware that the South Canterbury Chamber of Commerce has already connected in with 500+ businesses and Venture Timaru has reached out to food manufacturing employers re coming together to network directly with Smithfield workers.)</i></p>

Media/Holding lines

- We know this is a really difficult time for everyone affected by the closure, our staff are here to help.
- Getting New Zealanders into jobs is a key priority for us. Our Labour Market and Employment teams have strong relationships in the region.
- We will continue to work with those who need our assistance in the coming days.
- For those facing redundancy we have help available to look for new jobs, and income support for those who are eligible until other work can be found.
- We can confirm our Early Response Team have been in touch and we will begin seminars from 30 October support those impacted.
- MSD also recently introduced Kōrero Mahi, Let's talk work. This seminar is for all clients with full-time work obligations, who are new to benefit and otherwise wouldn't have any support.

Prevention – Services and Products

MSD has a range of products and services to support people at risk of job displacement from needing to come onto benefit in the first place. Such as, but not limited to the following:

Services

Early Response Redeployment Support service (ERRS)

- This team works with employers and people facing redundancy to enable the employer to redeploy and/or retrain their employees, or to support workers to transition to a new job or training opportunities.
- ERRS makes use of local knowledge about the jobs available and services in the community that can help people get through changes in their work situation and get a new job.

(Note Early Response Teams are currently operating with time limited funding ending June 2025)

Products

- **\$5k to Work incentive payment** can assist people who are 'at risk of long-term benefit receipt' to relocate for suitable and sustainable employment.
- **Flexi-Wage** can support employers to take on new employees who need some extra help to get started and learn new skills for a job.
- **Direct Career Service** provides personalised career advice for those needing assistance to transition to alternative employment, by identifying their current skills and exploring how these skills can be transferred to other industries.
- **Mana in Mahi** helps people who need additional support to get paid jobs and gain real world skills and experience. It supports them into long-term sustainable employment while gaining an apprenticeship or formal industry qualification.

Note - eligibility is determined on a case-by-case basis.

Employment

Early Response Teams support multiple business closures

Lead: Hugh Miller, Group General Manager, Employment

MSD's Early Response Teams have been supporting three large business closures across the country following their closure announcements in September. Providing employment services to affected workers.

Out of scope

Alliance Smithfield

- At the end of September, Alliance also announced the proposed closure of the Smithfield plant, Timaru.
- A final decision on closure is set to be made by 18 October with around 600 meatworkers and ancillary staff possibly impacted.
- MSD are proactively engaging with staff through drop-in sessions and providing job search advice. MSD will continue to refine our support alongside Te Puni Kōkiri, Workbridge, APM Workcare, and other partners who are offering support.

MSD's Early Response Teams support business closures across the country to source alternative employment for affected staff. In the 2023/24 financial year the teams supported 1,308 businesses, and secured employment for 2,010 affected workers. Early Response Teams are currently operating with time limited funding ending June 2025.

Responsible DCE: Viv Rickard, Deputy Chief Executive Service Delivery