



26 FEB 2018



Dear 

On 23 January 2018, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *The number of Full Time Equivalent staff (FTE) dedicated to responding to Official Information Act (OIA) requests and Ministerial enquiries for the past two financial years.*
- *The input of other staff across the Ministry to OIA responses and Ministerial enquiries for the past two financial years.*
- *The total cost associated with these functions for the past two financial years.*
- *The number of OIA requests received by the Ministry of Social Development for the past two financial years.*
- *The number of OIA requests received by your Minister for the past two financial years.*

On 25 January 2018, you clarified that your request for information regarding Ministerial enquiries refers to pieces of correspondence written to a Minister for which responses are prepared by the Ministry. You also clarified that you were seeking information regarding responses prepared on behalf of all Ministers associated with the Ministry of Social Development.

Please note that OIA requests can be made in a variety of forms, both verbally and in writing. Similarly, requests may be responded to either through the Ministry's formal OIA process, or through a number of other channels, including conversations with front-line staff and contact centres, or media queries.

Responses to formal OIA requests and pieces of correspondence sent to a Minister or the Chief Executive are coordinated and prepared by members of the Ministerial and Executive Services Team (MaES). An advisor from the MaES team works closely with other parts of the Ministry to either provide the requested information, including important context, or provide reasons why the information will not be released. The Ministry only withholds information if there are compelling reasons which meet the requirements of withholding grounds under the Official Information Act.

As discussed on 25 January 2018, the Ministry is unable to provide you with information regarding the input of wider Ministry staff into the OIA and correspondence processes. Staff outside of the MaES team provide ad hoc advice into these processes as part of their wider role. The Ministry is unable to separate the time spent on OIA or correspondence work from their other work. Similarly, the Ministry does not record information relating to OIA requests responded to outside of the formal MaES process in a way that can be easily identified. Your request for this information is therefore refused under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act as this information is not held by the Ministry and there are no grounds to believe that it is held by another department, Minister of the Crown, or organisation.

#### Cost to fund the MaES work

The cost to fund the activities of the MaES team was \$1.568 million for the 2015/16 financial year, and \$1.724 million during the 2016/17 financial year. As at the end of the 2015/16 financial year, MaES employed 19.8 FTE staff. At the end of the 2016/17 financial year, MaES employed 23 FTE staff. Please note that staff numbers are subject to change throughout the financial year in response to changing work volumes.

Please note, MaES also coordinates the responses to Written Parliamentary Questions on behalf of Ministers where these questions include information held by the Ministry, and works with the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner to investigate and resolve any complaints received by those offices regarding the Ministry.

#### OIA formal requests

The amount of work required by a MaES Advisor to prepare responses to OIA requests or pieces of correspondences varies significantly depending on the nature and volume of information requested.

During the 2015/2016 financial year, MaES processed 629 OIA Requests. Over this same period, 89 OIA requests were received on behalf of the Ministry's associated Ministers.

During the 2016/2017 financial year, the MaES processed 563 OIA requests, and prepared responses for 106 OIA requests received by Ministers.

Please note, on 1 April 2017, the Government established the Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki (now the Ministry for Children, Oranga Tamariki). The new Ministry includes the previous Child, Youth, and Family and a variety of other Ministry of Social Development functions. This led to a significant increase in the number of OIA requests received by both Ministries. During the period immediately following the establishment of the new Ministry, the Ministry of Social Development's MaES team provided transitional services to the new Ministry to assist in the answering of OIA requests and correspondence. These pieces of work are not counted in number of OIA requests provided above.

A breakdown of Ministerial OIA requests by the Minister on whose behalf the response was prepared for the financial years ending 30 June 2016 and 2017 is provided in the table overleaf.

Minister	2015/2016	2016/2017
Hon Adams	0	21
Hon Barry	0	1
Hon Bennett	26	16
Hon Goodhew	3	6
Hon Kaye	2	0
Hon Ngaro	0	5
Hon Tolley	51	41
Hon Wagner	7	16
<b>Total:</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>106</b>

**Notes:**

- These figures may include requests which were either received by a different agency and transferred to the Ministry of Social Development or received by the Ministry of Social Development and transferred to another agency under section 14 of the Official Information Act.
- Please note that during this period there were significant changes to the delegations and portfolios of Ministers.

Correspondence received

During the 2015/16 financial year, the Ministry received 1,166 pieces of correspondence for the Chief Executive, and 1,273 pieces of correspondence for the Ministry's associated Ministers.

During the 2016/2017 financial year, the Ministry received 1041 pieces of correspondence for the Chief Executive and 1,235 OIA requests for the Ministry's associated Ministers.

A breakdown of the Ministerial correspondence, by the Minister on whose behalf the response was prepared, covering the financial years ending 30 June 2016 and 2017 is provided in the below table.

Minister	2015/2016	2016/2017
Hon Adams	0	31
Hon Barry	121	72
Hon Bennett	93	60
Hon Goodhew	32	44
Hon Kaye	10	4
Hon Ngaro	0	21
Hon Tolley	928	946
Hon Wagner	89	57
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1273</b>	<b>1235</b>

**Notes:**

- These figure include all correspondence logged by the Ministry. This may include correspondence for which no further action was required as the correspondent's concerns were addressed in a different form.
- Please note that this period included several changes in Ministerial portfolios and delegations.

Further information regarding MaES work is available in the Annual Reports published on the Ministry's website here: [www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/corporate/annual-report/index.html](http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/corporate/annual-report/index.html).

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

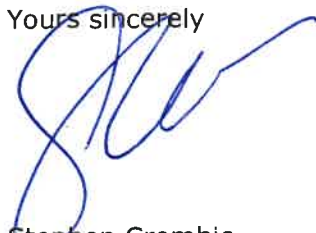
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

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

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding OIA requests and correspondence, 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.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Crombie  
**Deputy Chief Executive, Corporate Solutions**