



4 SEP 2019

Dear [REDACTED]

On 24 July 2019, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *How many communications/personal relations (PR) staff did the Ministry employ (FTE) for the years ending 30 June in 2014 and 2019?*
- *How many of these staff were employed (FTE) on contract for these two years?*
- *What was the communications/PR budget for these two years?*
- *What portion of this budget was spent on outside communications/PR consults or contractors?*
- *How many media enquiries did you receive for the years ending 30 June 2014 and 2019?*
- *What is your target turnaround time for media enquiries?*
- *How often did you meet the target response time in the last financial year?*
- *What proportion of time did your communications/PR team spend on responding to media enquiries last year?*
- *How many live media interviews (e.g. in person or over the phone) did your Chief Executive do last year?*
- *A copy of a policy or guidelines regarding how communications/PR staff should respond to media enquiries.*
- *How many of your current communications/PR employees are former journalists?*
- *What is the salary range paid to your communications/PR staff?*

The Ministry provides a range of services to more than one million New Zealanders every year. Communications staff ensure staff, clients, stakeholders, the public and providers are well informed about the services available and changes that affect them. The role of communications staff is varied, from proactively communicating information to the public about employment and training programmes, financial assistance and communication around emergency responses, developing communications on new policy, and responding to media queries.

The Ministry has a big focus on ensuring that all staff, and particularly those who work with our clients, have all the up-to-date information on new policies and services to support clients. Communications staff also support internal communications around health, safety and security, collective negotiations, as well as organisational changes.

Your questions are answered in turn below.

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- *What is the salary range paid to your communications/PR staff?*

In the 2013/14 financial year, the number of communications employees working for the Ministry equated to 24.4 full-time equivalent (FTE). None of these staff were employed as contractors. The total budget allocation for communications, which includes salary costs and operational costs, was \$3.492 million. There were no consultants or contractors in this year.

In the 2018/19 financial year, the number of communications employees working for the Ministry equated to 19.1 (FTE), with a headcount of 23 communications staff. Twelve of these employees are former journalists. The number of communications employees employed on contract equates to 0.42 (FTE). The cost of remuneration for communications staff was \$2.042 million, whilst the operational budget was \$265,444. A further \$82,400 was spent on external communications consultants and contractors. The salary range for communications staff depends on the position. The Communications Advisor salary range is from \$65,056 to \$97,585 (midpoint being \$81,321) and the Manager Corporate Communication salary range is from \$109,999 to \$164,999 (midpoint being \$137,499).

Figures from the 2014/15 period and 2018/2019 are not strictly comparable, due to several changes at the Ministry. Some of the Ministry's functions in relation to the care and protection of children were transferred to Oranga Tamariki in 2017, and further functions relating to housing were transferred to the new Ministry of Housing and Urban Development in 2018.

- *How many media enquiries did you receive for the years ending 30 June 2014 and 2019?*
- *What proportion of time did your communications/PR team spend on responding to media enquiries last year?*

In the 2018/19 financial year, the communications team received 859 media enquiries. We do not hold complete data for the year ending June 2014. As such, I am refusing your request under section 18(g) of the Official Information 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. We do, however, hold figures for May and June 2014. For those two months we received 108 queries.

We have three media advisors whose duties include responding to media queries, however, we do not track the proportion of time spent on responding to media enquiries. I am, therefore, refusing your request under section 18(g) of the Official Information 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.

- *How many live media interviews (e.g. in person or over the phone) did your Chief Executive do last year?*

The Ministry's senior leaders regularly do interviews for radio or television. The former Chief Executive, Brendan Boyle, did one live media interview during the 2018/19 financial year.

- *What is your target turnaround time for media enquiries?*
- *How often did you meet the target response time in the last financial year?*

There is no specific target turnaround time for media enquiries. Our staff aim to meet reporters' deadlines, which can range from a few hours to a few days depending on the type of publication. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act as this information does not exist.

- *A copy of a policy or guidelines regarding how communications/PR staff should respond to media enquiries.*

The Ministry's communications staff respond to media enquiries on a case by case basis to be able to respond effectively to reporters' various requests and deadlines. As such, your request for policies or guidelines on how communications/PR staff respond to media enquiries is refused under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act as this information does not exist.

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

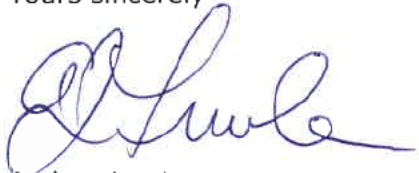
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

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.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding the Ministry's communications staff, 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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Lawton', written in a cursive style.

Andrea Lawton

Deputy Chief Executive, People Culture and Strategy