



OIA24-0269

2 May 2024

Geraldine Power
fyi-request-26485-c89e67c4@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Geraldine Power

Thank you for your email of 19 April 2024 requesting information relating to Public Relations and Communications staff at the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI). Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

The communications team provides support to MPI's five business units – Biosecurity New Zealand, Fisheries New Zealand, New Zealand Food Safety, Te Uru Rākau – New Zealand Forest Service and Agriculture and Investment Services and to our five Ministers' offices.

This includes:

- Answering daily media queries. MPI receives approximately 1000 media queries a year, each with multiple questions and our media phone is monitored seven days a week.
- In 2022/2023, MPI communications provided support for a range of issues and major events, including providing key updates and information to the public about Cyclone Gabrielle and other North Island weather events – this ranged from emergency communications at the time of events to telling farmers and growers where they could get financial and practical help (including applying to MPI for grants). MPI worked alongside key sector organisations and communications teams.
- Food safety-related work relating to large recalls (for example, a sizeable recall covering tahini products), shellfish toxin alerts, and general advice for consumers about food safety.
- Biosecurity responses, including Caulerpa, the freshwater clam, and Mycoplasma bovis. Other work included the introduction of the New Zealand Traveller Declaration and major readiness efforts should Foot and Mouth Disease arrive here.
- Highlighting work with the food and fibre sector on projects through the Sustainable Food and Fibre Futures fund
- The ongoing rollout of cameras on fishing vessels, compliance activities in fisheries and animal welfare, readiness work for Foot and Mouth Disease and Kauri protection.
- Providing support for public consultations regarding policy and regulatory changes.
- Supporting marketing campaigns that raise public awareness about pests and diseases that might affect the primary sector.
- Assisting in the publication of key documents including MPI's Annual Review, Situation and Outlook for Primary Industries, Fieldays publications, and other material.

You requested the following:

How many comms / PR staff were employed on 1 March 2024?

For information relating to the number of Communications staff MPI has had, broken down by year, please refer to question 52 of the 2022/23 Annual Review available here:

https://www.parliament.nz/resource/en-NZ/54SCPRIP_EVI_e5d5797d-752d-47cb-83d1-08dbff6cce5c_PRIP245/b35872831b3ac5d338f9d2429f101650f3bb1b42

As you will see, for the 2022/23 financial year, MPI had a total of 27.6 FTE Communications staff. As at 30 March 2024, this number has decreased to a total of 24.6 FTE staff.

As you may be aware, the Government set MPI a 7.5% budget reduction target effective from 1 July 2024. Please note that some communications roles are affected following the proposed staffing reductions. MPI is currently consulting with staff and no final decisions have been made.

MPI does not have any consultants, contractors, or agencies to provide communications, media or public relations advice or services.

Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise these with the Ministry for Primary Industries at Official.InformationAct@mpi.govt.nz. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143 or at info@ombudsman.parliament.nz.

Yours sincerely



Sean Scanlon
Director, Communications