

7 September 2020

Tim Benseman
fyi-request-13581-bee44572@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Tim

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation, received on 24 August 2020, in which you ask some specific questions about the team that handles all the Department of Conservation's OIAs.

The Government Services team in the Department of Conservation looks after the standards and processes to support the Minister of Conservation with information, advice and correspondence. The team also manages DOC's systems to ensure compliance with the Privacy Act (1993) and the Official Information Act (1982).

There are 11 staff in the Government Services team, 2.5 of them are responsible for the handling the Department's OIAs and the OIA system.

The OIA team is made up of a Principal Advisor, a Senior Advisor and a Government Services Advisor. Part of the Government Services Advisor's role is to support OIAs. There are no contractors in the team, however, from time to time temporary support may be required when a team member is on extended leave. The team have a combined 30 years' experience delivering OIA systems and support, and they have graduate and post-graduate qualifications in Arts, Science and Information Studies.

There are no vehicles supplied to staff. The itemised budget for the OIA team represents the salaries of the individuals in the team. This information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the OIA to protect the privacy of those individuals. In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Official Information Act.

OIA requests coming into DOC are either received directly by the Government Services team from a requester or forwarded to Government Services by DOC staff. They are then assessed and assigned to a business groups to respond. OIAs are assigned to the part of the business best able to respond to the OIA. The OIA team support the business by providing advice and quality assurance of their responses.

The OIA team has no direct contact with the entities you mentioned other than through the processing of OIA requests. As part of the OIA process, OIAs that relate to the function of another agency subject to the OIA can be transferred and in the last two years, five transfer



letters were sent to OSPRI. All OIAs are acknowledged when they are received. There have been 60 acknowledgement emails sent to Forest and Bird and two to Beef and Lamb NZ in the last two years.

DOC is required to meet the legislative requirements set by the OIA. The Ombudsman and the Public Service Commission set the standards by which DOC and other agencies are expected to operate. Within DOC the Director, Government Services, oversees the OIA policy and approves the guidance material that is used to assist DOC to meet the required OIA standards. The Chief Legal Advisor is responsible for the delegations from the Director-General.

The key documents relevant to DOC's OIA process are as follows:

- Official information and proactive release policy
- OIA standard operating procedures
- Official Information Act delegations
- OIA guidance & templates – 40 documents outlining the steps to take and the standard response templates

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L Alcock'.

Lucy Alcock
Director Government Services
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai