



**18 December 2020**

**Rawiri Piahana**

By email: [fyi-request-14201-4e3a0d51@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-14201-4e3a0d51@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Dear Rawiri

**Official information request for information around University Hall accommodation advice during lockdown due to COVID**

I refer to your request for information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) dated **25 November 2020**:

*"I am requesting information around the University halls being shut and students impacted from halls during lockdown this year.*

*Did the University receive legal advice around sending the initial email to students - from accommodation services - "Subject: Communication to all hall students COVID-19 - returning home" on the 23rd of March this year.*

*If the University received legal advice, are you able to provide a copy of the advice?*

*Did the University receive legal advice when the decision was made and an email was sent around the 24th of April to start charging for accommodation even though students who were not in their halls would not be able to return because of the lockdown level?*

*If the University received legal advice, are you able to provide a copy of the advice?*

*Am I able to get all correspondence related to the making of this decision, including who heads the department or division ultimately?*

*Am I able to all get correspondence related to the change in direction and the overturning of this decision to charge a fee to students who would not be able to return?*

*- A lot of public pressure was put on the University and I am interested in understanding what was going through the minds of senior staff, because the Vice-chancellor appeared to be clear that this would happen?*

*The University has stated how much the lockdown would cause a loss in accommodation and that this should not be subsidised by academic funds. Now that we are approaching the end of the year, can you tell me how much the University has had to cover/pay because students were not in their halls and thus were not required to pay their fees over lockdown?*

*- I would not expect this to include any costs for advertising to fill empty beds, grants that covered accommodation fees, wages for staff positions that have not existed previously, depreciation and such.*

*- I would expect this loss calculation to include savings due to lower catering costs, power costs, staff departing and not being paid, cleaning cost savings (if they were not paid) and such.*

*Has the University received or used any grants to cover accommodation costs for students while they were not in halls?"*

The Act requires that we advise you of our decision on your request no later than 20 working days after the day we received your request. Unfortunately, it will not be possible to meet that time limit and we are therefore writing to notify you of an extension of the time to make our decision, to **12 February 2021**.

This extension is necessary because consultations necessary to make a decision on your request are such that a proper response cannot reasonably be made within the original time limit, taking into account the fact that many University personnel are on leave over the holiday period.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact me at [oiarequests@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:oiarequests@vuw.ac.nz).

Yours sincerely

**Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington**