

29 April 2021

M.R Hawk

fyi-request-14847-864031ce@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear M.R Hawk

I refer to your request received on 4 March 2021, which has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) for information relating to the support provided to the media. Please find a response to each part of your request below:

- 1. Please provide a breakdown of the \$1.3m subscription spend, by media organisation subscribed to, also indicating whether the subscription was new for 2020/21 or previously existing.**

Please find attached as appendix one to this letter.

We do not have information about the number of existing subscriptions for each government agency, for the nine media organisations. In the interest of time, we needed to follow a process that enabled us to make good decisions without needing specific detail from each government agency or media organisation. We agreed the number of subscriptions to be purchased for each agency, and the pricing, based on the following factors:

- *The size of each Public Services Department that will receive the subscription and the number of staff requiring a license.*
- *The average number of licenses that an organisation of that size would acquire for the subscription.*
- *The pricing models provided by each applicant.*

Where agencies had existing subscriptions, the subscription purchased by Manatū Taonga (MCH) was to start at the end of the current term (e.g. if the current subscription ended in November 2020, the new 12-month subscription was purchased upfront but would start in December 2020 for a 12-month duration). The start date for new subscriptions was arranged by the media organisation and agencies directly.

- 2. Please provide a breakdown of the \$11.1m targeted assistance to media companies, detailing which companies received the assistance, the quantum of assistance and any conditions associated with the assistance.**

The \$11.1M Supplementary Fund was a discretionary fund available for use as the impact of COVID-19 on the media sector evolved. This was ultimately used to deliver two initiatives:

- *Advance Government Advertising Initiative; advance payments to local media businesses for advertising space that will be placed during 2020/21 by core government organisations.*
- *Publications Initiative; a flat-rated, one-off grant for magazines and community newspapers impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown.*

For which companies received the assistance and the quantum of assistance for these two initiatives, this is included in appendix one.

In addition:

- *Once exact subscription costs were confirmed, a total of \$1.55 million was spent on Subscriptions and the additional \$0.25 million was secured from the Supplementary Fund.*
- *The Advertising Standards Authority received \$150k from the Supplementary Fund.*

Associated conditions

The associated conditions can be found in the website content, application forms (which for publications includes the terms of agreement) and, for the Advertising initiative, the terms and conditions of the loan. These documents are released to you.

- 3. What conditions or framework were employed to judge the suitability of the merits of applications for relief under the \$11.1m targeted assistance program? Please provide a copy of the conditions/criteria/framework used in the decision-making process.**

For both Advertising and Publications initiatives the eligibility criteria were outlined in the website content and application forms, which have been provided. This is the criteria that was used to judge the suitability of the application.

The general framework for the initiatives in Media Package One followed a similar process:

- a) A review process, which would include an initial review by a Customer Services Representative (CSR) or Case Manager*
- b) If required, a further Specialist/Technical review to test specific aspects of the application or if a second opinion was required*
- c) A peer review for QA purposes eg to double check bank account details and financial information.*
- d) An escalation process was generally employed for cases where the eligibility was less clear cut (the Advertising initiative included the option to escalate to the Initiative Lead and the Publications initiative had a Moderation Panel).*
- e) Approval process – advertising included Treasury and Publications the final approval was the MCH Sector Support Governance Group (SSGC)*

All the steps and outcomes at each stage of the decision-making process were recorded in a database.

We have provided documentation where relevant.

- 4. Were any applications for targeted assistance rejected, if so please provide details?**

Advertising – 44 applications of which 31 were successful, 7 withdrew from the initiative and 6 were declined because they failed to meet the eligibility criteria.

Publications – 369 applications of which 34 were declined because they failed to meet the eligibility criteria.

5. The [press] release states “The key concepts of the fund have been developed alongside independent media experts”. Please provide the identities of the "independent media experts", their qualifications, remuneration arrangements (if any) for said advice and details of their appointment process.

These experts were Gavin Ellis and Peter Bale.

Appointments process

NZ On Air recruited two experienced journalism experts to assist with early work on the initiative at a time when the project was confidential and so wider consultation was not possible.

NZ On Air has engaged Gavin Ellis as an independent expert on a number of previous occasions to review regional media funding and the LDR scheme, and so invited him to bring his extensive experience and industry knowledge to this early work.

Peter Bale was invited to provide his extensive international perspective, and an added impartial view as someone knowledgeable about but not at that time employed by any NZ media.

Qualifications

Gavin Ellis holds a PhD in political studies. He is a media consultant and researcher. A former editor-in-chief of the *New Zealand Herald*, he has a background in journalism and communications – covering both editorial and management roles – that spans more than half a century. His editorship of the *Herald* coincided with a period of major redevelopment of the broadsheet weekday newspaper, the launch of the *Weekend Herald*, and the creation of the newspapers’ Internet presence. A strong advocate of freedom of speech, he was chairman of the New Zealand Media Freedom Committee and was recipient of the British Commonwealth Astor Press Freedom Award in 2005. He was created an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the 2015 Queen’s Birthday Honours List for services to journalism. He has been a university lecturer in politics and media studies and a regular commentator on radio. As a consultant, he has advised on significant developments in media in New Zealand.

Peter Bale is a New Zealand-born journalist and COVID refugee who has spent most of his working life overseas, with roles at Reuters, The Financial Times, News Corporation, Microsoft and CNN. He was the chief executive officer of investigative news organisation The Center for Public Integrity when its ICIJ team published the Panama Papers. He's been a consultant with clients from CGTN in China to Facebook. In New Zealand he's working for Stuff on some strategic questions and has written for The Spinoff, BusinessDesk, and Newsroom.

Remuneration

- Gavin Ellis \$1,134.30
- Peter Bale \$13,281.00

I trust this information answers your queries. However, if you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact uia@mch.govt.nz.

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 or freephone 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liz Stewart". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'L'.

Liz Stewart

Programme Manager, COVID Response Media and Broadcasting Programme