

17 March 2023



John Luke  
fyi-request-21885-2132017d@requests.fyi.org.nz

REF: DOIA-2223-0600

Tēnā koe John

Thank you for your email of 20 February 2023 to the Ministry for Ethnic Communities (the Ministry) requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA).

I will respond to each of your requests in turn:

*...I noted, you have "a Honours project team", may I request the org chart of this team. Also when does this team established?*

The Honours Project Team is a temporary team made up of staff from the Strategic Engagement and Partnerships Team and the staff member responsible for Nominations. They come together as the Honours Project team to work on Honours, as well as their usual work. The first team was set up March/April 2022. The numbers and members of the team can change depending on workloads.

Please refer to Appendix 1 for the org chart. Please note that this org chart is current as of March 2023.

*...I noted, "Information about the people's service/contributions/achievements are gathered from formal and informal sources." Can you specify, what formal means and what informal means, and please give example of some sources you have used...*

Formal sources are information that can be verified, such as published material (e.g., published annual reports) and information on Government's websites. Informal sources are information that isn't necessarily possible to be verified, such as organisation newsletters or magazines.

*...Can you please also let me know how many nomination you have submitted to DIEC Minister for review, how many the DIEC Minister agreed to nominate and how many she disagreed...*

As you are already aware, some information about the New Zealand Royal Honours (NZRH) nominations is available in the Ministry's published annual report. The Ministry believes that this level of information is appropriate and doesn't see the need to elaborate further.

Protecting the confidentiality of material about the NZRH nominations and appointments is essential to maintaining the integrity of the NZRH system – in particular, the protection of such information ensures that those engaging with the Honours system can rely on the confidentiality of the process.

I am therefore refusing this part of your request under the following sections of the OIA:

- Section 9(2)(ba)(ii) to protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence or which any person has been or could be compelled to provide under the authority of any enactment, where the making available of the information would be likely otherwise to damage the public interest; and
- Section 9(2)(g)(i) to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any public service agency or organisation in the course of their duty.

*...I noted "the Ministry nominated 11 candidates for a New Zealand Royal Honour", may I know if possible, what is the success rate of these candidates, e.g. how many candidates you nominated actually received the New Zealand Royal Honour...*

The Ministry holds information regarding the candidates it nominated and who received a NZRH. However, the Ministry is refusing to release this information under section 9(2)(ba)(ii) of the OIA to protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence or which any person has been or could be compelled to provide under the authority of any enactment, where the making available of the information would be likely otherwise to damage the public interest.

To provide context, successive Ombudsmen have considered that information relating to the NZRH system may be withheld under the OIA because there is a strong public interest in the protection of the confidentiality of the NZRH process. For example, information on the number on nominees who have declined honours have been subject of an investigation by a former Chief Ombudsman, who noted that although there was a public interest in the disclosure of information about the NZRH system, the overall public interest is not served by disclosing information that undermines that very system.

As required by section 9(1) of the OIA, I have considered whether the grounds for withholding information under sections 9(2)(ba)(ii) and 9(2)(g)(i) of the OIA are outweighed by other considerations which would make it desirable, in the public interest, to make that information available. In this instance, I do not consider that to be the case.

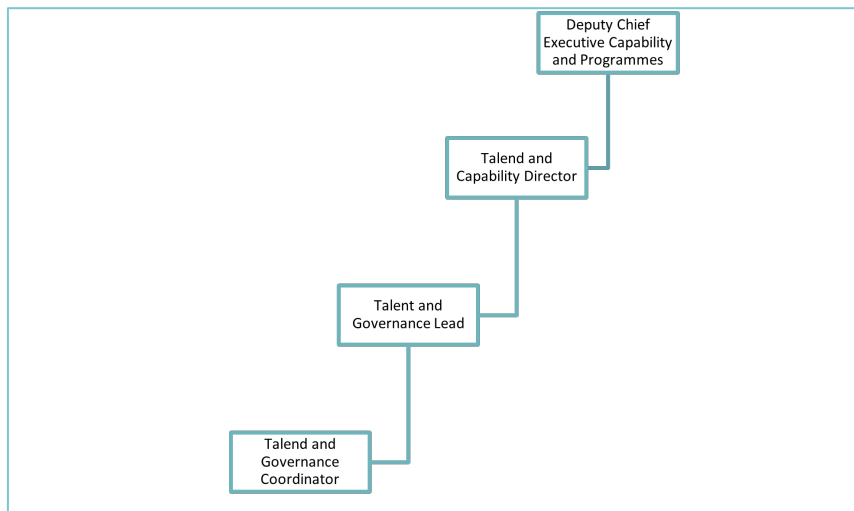
You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of our response to your request. Information about how to contact the Ombudsman's office is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone on 0800 802 602,

Ngā mihi,

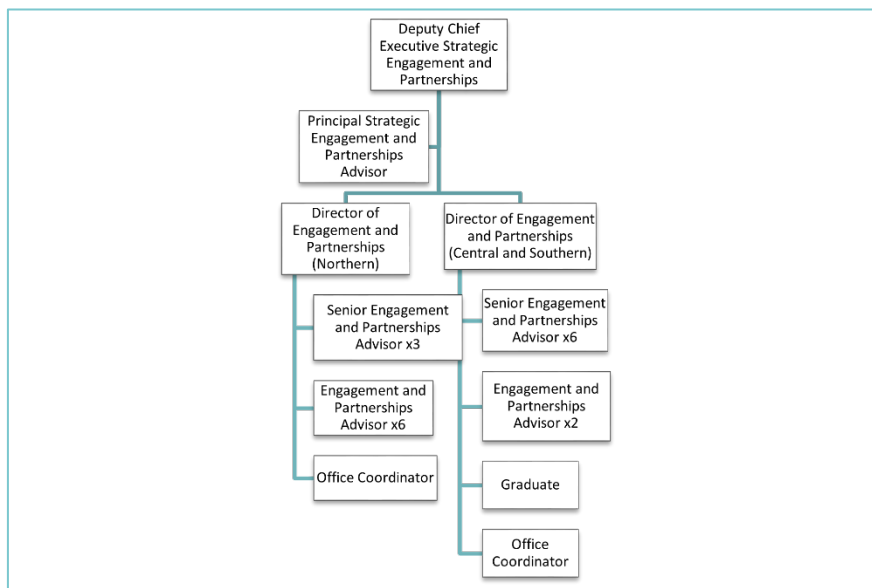


Edward Firth  
**Director of Ministerial Services**

Appendix 1.



Core Staff – Honours Project team



Support Staff – Honours Project team