

17 August 2023

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OIA 28747

Tēnā koe Beryl Beauchamp

I refer to your email of 25 July 2023 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

1. *I request all documents (including reports, emails, file notes, aides memoire, instant messages) held by MFAT relating to Andrew Fale Lesa.*
2. *In addition, I make two further direct request: has MFAT either by way of receiving a complaint or from its own initiative investigated Mr Lesa's claim to be a New Zealand diplomat? If so what, if any, action has been taken in response to any concerns?*
3. *Secondly, what processes does MFAT have in place to prevent an individual from falsely claiming to represent New Zealand?*

Mr Lesa claims on a variety of websites and news outlets to be a New Zealand diplomat:

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/covid-19-delta-outbreak-kiwi-diplomat-pleads-for-miq-space-to-attend-world-democracy-forum/YMPXUL5F7S5PW5DCFUWTORZXE4/>

http://www.china.org.cn/world/2016-09/22/content_39350759.htm

Your requests are numbered for ease of reference.

Regarding the first part of your request for documents relating to Andrew Fale Lesa, all information in scope is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the OIA, to protect individuals' privacy.

Regarding the second part of your request, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (the Ministry) has not investigated any complaints concerning allegations that Mr Lesa has claimed to be a New Zealand diplomat.

Regarding the third part of your request. The Ministry considers the circumstances relating to any false claims on a case-by-case basis, providing support to other relevant agency's investigations such as New Zealand Police, and considering other relevant factors such as damage to the Ministry's reputation or the reputation of New Zealand.

Where the information has been withheld under section 9 of the OIA, we have identified no public interest in releasing the information that would override the reasons for withholding it.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Therefore, our response to your request (with your personal information removed) may be published on the Ministry website: [Official Information Act responses | New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade \(mfat.govt.nz\)](#)

If you have any questions about this decision, you can contact us by email at: DM-ESD@mfat.govt.nz. You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision by contacting www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SC', written in a cursive style.

Sarah Corbett
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade