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25 August 2023

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Tēnā koe Ms Metcalfe

**OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982 (OIA) – REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION -  
CHRISTCHURCH INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT LIMITED (CIAL)**

1. We write further to our email of 02 August 2023, acknowledging receipt of your OIA request of 29 July 2023 seeking information (if held by CIAL) in relation to the proposed Central Otago airport project.

We have answered your request in this letter and for completeness, we set out your request below. Please note, after your initial request, you sent to a further email clarification regarding the region in which you were requesting.

**Request: Received 29 July 2023 - Radio NZ interview about "levels of service" in Wanaka and how funded**

*I read with interest the Radio NZ article about Rhys Boswell's visit to Wanaka recently.*

*In that interview, he said "the level of service you enjoy in this part of the world far exceeds Oamaru, Timaru, Ashburton, but that only exists because of the visitor economy."*

*This is an Official Information Act request to ask you for:*

- a) details of "the level of service" Rhys Boswell is referring to - including documentation, reports, analysis, background detail and correspondence
- b) data, research and analysis which proves that "The level of service you enjoy in this part of the world far exceeds Oamaru, Timaru, Ashburton"
- c) data, research and analysis which proves that "that only exists because of the visitor economy"
- d) all correspondence about this topic with the respective councils of Oamaru, Timaru, Ashburton, Central Otago and Queenstown

*e) If engaged by Christchurch Airport, the qualifications and experience (essentially biography) of any experts to work on such analyses above.*

**Clarification to your request: Received 29 July 2023**

*As a follow up, I should say that my request relates not just to Wanaka or the Upper Clutha, but to "the region" (Central Otago generally) as was referred to in the RNZ article reporting on Mr Boswell's visit.*

2. It is pertinent to note that CIAL will provide you with the requested information where it is able. The OIA permits an organisation to refuse to release requested information it holds if the withholding of such information is necessary to enable the organisation to carry out its commercial activities or negotiations without prejudice or disadvantage (s 9(i) and s9(j) OIA) provided that such withholding is not outweighed in the circumstances by the public interest in making the specific information available. For example, while it may be in the public interest to understand that CIAL is investigating the feasibility of establishing an airport in Central Otago that does not mean CIAL must share every detail of its analysis, work or negotiations within specific work streams.
3. At present, CIAL is under no legal obligation to consult in relation to the Project. To assist public understanding of the context of the Project and CIAL's decisions, CIAL has committed to, and does, proactively publish information as it completes pieces of work which is likely to be in the public interest to receive on its dedicated Project web-site at <https://www.centralotagoairport.co.nz/>. Until work is completed, it is not capable of being released. Over time this will see more information voluntarily released. In such instances the public interest test will have been considered and weighed up as part of the decision whether to release information or not. Equally, each OIA query CIAL receives will be assessed on a case by case basis given the particular given facts and circumstances at play at that time.
4. CIAL is a council-controlled trading organisation that has been specifically established to operate and manage its business as an independent commercial undertaking for the purposes of making a profit, and to follow generally accepted commercial practices and disciplines. CIAL is not a public body collecting and spending public funds. It operates as a wholly commercial, standalone entity. Due to the size and scale of those activities it is one of only three major airports in New Zealand regulated under Part 4 of the Commerce Act.
5. As an airport, CIAL has a further overriding obligation under the Airport Authorities Act to act as a commercial undertaking. It does so in a commercially competitive environment both domestically and internationally, where its competitors are not under corresponding disclosure requirements. The proposed Central Otago airport project is a complex commercial activity, acknowledged as being in competition with the interests of other airports within New Zealand.
6. In respect to your request and further clarification noted above, we respond as follows:

**Request:**

- a. *details of "the level of service" Rhys Boswell is referring to - including documentation, reports, analysis, background detail and correspondence.*

From the outset, Rhys Boswell's comments were referring generally to the level of connectivity and infrastructure services. His presentation was a discussion piece, where he shared his perspective.

There can be no dispute that Central Otago enjoys a greater level of service. Its airport has in excess of 2,000,000 passenger movements and direct connections to seven destinations, whilst in comparison, Ashburton and Oamaru has no commercial services. In addition, Timaru's airport website shows it has 13 weekly services to Wellington which are serviced by a Dash 8-Q300 aircraft.

Further details and information are withheld under Section 18(d) of the OIA, given information of a general and summary nature in relation to the Central Otago visitor economy will soon be publicly available and released.

- b. data, research and analysis which proves that "The level of service you enjoy in this part of the world far exceeds Oamaru, Timaru, Ashburton" – **As above.***
  - c. data, research and analysis which proves that "that only exists because of the visitor economy." – **As above.***
  - d. all correspondence about this topic with the respective councils of Oamaru, Timaru, Ashburton, Central Otago and Queenstown. – **As above.***
  - e. If engaged by Christchurch Airport, the qualifications and experience (essentially biography) of any experts to work on such analyses above. – **As above.***
7. We trust we have answered your requests for information. If you require any further information or if we have in some way misinterpreted your requests, please let us know.
8. You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of the decisions contained in this letter. Information about how to contact the Ombudsman or make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

**CIAL LEGAL TEAM**

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