



**Te Tari Taiwhenua
Internal Affairs**

27 June 2024

Joe
fyi-request-27127-b229500c@requests.fyi.org.nz

45 Pipitea St
PO Box 805
Wellington 6140
Phone +64 4 495 7200
Fax +64 4 495 7222
Website dia.govt.nz

Tēnā koe Joe,

Official Information Act 1982 request, reference OIA2324-1052

Thank you for your email of 4 June 2024 to Te Tari Taiwhenua | Department of Internal Affairs requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

I am seeking clarification regarding the position of the Department of Internal Affairs and their advice to NZ government agencies, regarding "communication plans" which include "email redirection".

*[The remainder of your request is attached as **Appendix A**]*

On 17 June 2024, you clarified that you are after information relating to:

- Government Chief Data Officer
- Government Chief Privacy Officer
- Government Chief Information Officer.

I can advise that we have not produced any advice regarding email forwarding or email blocking to agencies for managing unreasonable complainant conduct. Therefore, your request is refused under 18(e) of the Act, as the information does not exist.

Access to the Ombudsman

You have the right, under section 28 of the Act, to seek an investigation and review of this response by the Office of the Ombudsman. The postal address is PO Box 10152, Wellington. Alternatively, you can phone 0800 802 602 or email info@ombudsman.parliament.govt.nz

Proactive release of your request

The response to your request will be published online at www.dia.govt.nz. This letter, with your personal details removed, will be published in its entirety. Publishing responses increases the availability of information to the public and is consistent with the Act's purpose of enabling effective participation in the making and administration of laws and policies and promoting the accountability of Ministers and officials.

Nāku noa, nā

Jeremy Cauchi
Director Ministerial, Monitoring, and Capability

Appendix A

I am seeking clarification regarding the position of the Department of Internal Affairs and their advice to NZ government agencies, regarding "communication plans" which include "email redirection".

In ACC's response GOV-005668 (04/08/2020), Sasha Wood, Manager Official Information Act Services, stated:

"Redirection of emails, outside of a communication plan, may occur..."

In ACC's response GOV-026875 (11/08/2023), Sara Freitag, Acting Manager Official Information Act Services, wrote:

"ACC's Communication Plan Policy was approved in December 2022. This policy is a formal document outlining the process undertaken if client's behaviour or communication is unreasonable; this process includes email redirection."

ACC's Communication Plan Policy v2.0 states:

"The restrictions that can be placed on a client are the same as those outlined by the Ombudsman in Managing unreasonable complainant conduct practice manual."

In ACC's response GOV-029414 (15/12/2023), Sara Freitag, Manager Official Information Act Services, wrote:

"We currently have a total of 71 mail flow rules for email redirection purposes."

In ACC's response GOV-029712 (29/01/2024) Jason Hope, Acting Manager Official Information Act Service, wrote:

"ACC has 75 client email addresses subject to email redirection. These email addresses are either linked to at least one client in EOS or are not linked to a client in EOS but we have otherwise determined are emails used by clients. Some of these may also be linked to non-client records. We have identified a further nine email addresses subject to email redirection, which were previously linked to a client in EOS."

I can find no mention of "email redirection" in the Ombudsman's manual, only references to email blocking or forwarding (both legitimate and lawful). The comment on p 100 could be loosely interpreted as "email forwarding", but then Chapter 20 starts with "What if access cannot be restricted or we have contributed to the problem?"

I request documents, reports, advice, or any other information, that describe the Department of Internal Affairs': understanding of:

- (a) the meaning of "email redirection",*
- (b) when "email redirection" is to be implemented as part of a communication plan,*
- (c) how "email redirection" is to be implemented,*

Please specify whether the "email redirection" should:

- (a) occur during transit, that is the email is redirected to an unintended person at an email server and before reaching the intended recipient, or*
- (b) occur after the intended recipient received the email, which requires either the intended recipient to open and forward the email manually, or the intended recipient sets up a rule so that the email is forwarded to a person that they designated.*



To clarify, in scenario (a) all of the sender's emails are redirected to an unintended recipient, including all emails sent to the general complaint team inbox. That is, not one communication is ever received by the intended recipient. However, in scenario (b), the intended recipient receives the communication, but then the intended recipient chooses whom to forward the message to (like their manager).

I request the list of documents which informed the Department of Internal Affairs' advice and the discussion papers as to how restriction of complainants' communications is consistent with obligations imposed under the OIA, Privacy Act, NZBoRA, and any other legislation that confers rights of freedom of expression (seeking, obtaining, and disseminating information)

Please specify whether the extreme steps of restricting communications is applicable when the complainant has legitimate complaints, which are not being addressed in accordance with the law, and when the complainant has not been violent or abusive, but has only been persistent expressed frustration or has been simply annoying.