

Hon Chris Bishop

Minister of Housing
Minister for Infrastructure
Minister Responsible for RMA Reform
Minister for Sport and Recreation
Leader of the House
Associate Minister of Finance



12 JUL 2024

OIA24-CB181

Suze Keith
fyi-request-27280-aa18de01@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Suze

Thank you for your email of 17 June 2024 requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

Could you please send me a copy of all the applicants who applied to be considered for Schedule A and B of the Fast Track Approvals Bill? There is extremely high public interest in the Bill, the projects it is likely to involve and the fact that a process is underway despite the bill not yet being finalised and enacted.

The Government has committed to introducing a permanent approvals regime to deliver a range of regionally and nationally significant housing, infrastructure, renewable energy and development projects.

The Fast-track Approvals Bill is part of the Government's wider resource management reform programme.

Public submissions on the Fast-track Approvals Bill closed on 19 April 2024. The Select Committee will report back to the House with a revision tracked version of the Bill later in the year. Progress on the Bill can be followed on the Environment Select Committee page [at: https://bills.parliament.nz/v/Bill/083f0a7b-f182-41d5-0897-08dc3e31559c](https://bills.parliament.nz/v/Bill/083f0a7b-f182-41d5-0897-08dc3e31559c).

At this stage, I am withholding the 'list of applicants' in full under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Act. I make this decision to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials.

Decisions on applications for inclusion in the Fast-track Approvals Bill are yet to be made. Releasing the list of applicants at this time would impact the orderly and effective conduct of executive government decision-making processes. I consider that the release of the list of applicants will result in extensive lobbying, even campaigning, both for and against applications ahead of Cabinet consideration. Attempts would likely be made to influence Cabinet Ministers outside of the prescribed process and without the benefit of the full information and advice that Ministers will receive.

There has been significant public interest in Fast-track project applications and the Fast-track Approvals Bill more generally. However, in terms of section 9(1) of the Act, I am satisfied that, in the circumstances, the withholding of this information is not outweighed by other considerations that render it desirable to make the information available in the public interest. Official information regimes globally and the Chief Ombudsman's guidance, recognise that the Government and Ministers need to be able to take advice and to deliberate on it, in private, and without fear of premature disclosure.

For the reasons already articulated, I consider that it is likely that releasing the list of applicants at this time would impact the orderly and effective conduct of executive government decision making processes.

I invite you to review the material we have proactively released on the Fast-track Approvals Bill on the Ministry for the Environment's website at: environment.govt.nz/what-government-is-doing/cabinet-papers-and-regulatory-impact-statements/fast-track-approvals-bill/.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Office of the Ombudsman of my decision to withhold information relating to this request, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. The relevant details can be found on their website at: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

Please contact my office if you have any queries about this response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris Bishop', is positioned above the typed name.

Hon. Chris Bishop
Minister Responsible for RMA Reform