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Erika Whittome

By email: fyi-request-27412-53cac7e9@requests.fyi.org.nz  
Ref: H2024045252

Tēnā koe Erika

### **Response to your request for official information**

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health – Manatū Hauora (the Ministry) on 27 June 2024. You requested:

*"I would like an extract of the annual amounts spent by "Sector Operations" from the 2020/2021, 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 financial years.*

*I would like the following details provided:*

- Payee name / Recipient*
- Department or Name of the program of work*
- Program manager*
- Total Amount Spent*

*I believe this information would be readily available via an extract from your Accounts Payable system or your Program Portfolio Management software (eg Sentient or Salesforce etc)"*

On 9 July 2024 the Ministry contacted you in accordance with section 18B of the Act to advise:

*Your request, as it is currently worded, requires a search through a very large volume of information. The Ministry does not have a single data system that would make the information easily retrievable and enable an extract of the data as suggested in your original request.*

*Your request may be refused under section 18(f) of the Act as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.*

*Your request would require a very large volume of information, which requires individual assessment of each payees information held across multiple databases. This would place an unreasonable degree of strain on the team responsible and would interfere with the day-to-day workings of the Ministry.*

*If you are able to refine the scope of your request we may be able to provide some information you are interested in.*

*In the first instance, we suggest you refer to the Ministry's Annual Reports, which outline detailed agency expenditure: <https://www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/corporate-publications/annual-reports>.*

On 11 July 2024 you replied:

*This request for information is for the Payee name / Recipient which will be registered companies. It won't be individuals because it's not personnel payroll data.*

*I disagree that records of registered companies receiving payments will require individual assessment of each payee. This is because companies are already listed on the companies website which is public information. Companies are not persons.*

*I also disagree that the information is held across multiple databases makes it a strain on team responsibility. There are only 3 sector operations offices: Wellington Dunedin and Whanganui.*

*In around 2006 John Key kicked off an IT program for a single consolidated Oracle Financials system for the DHBs, and one would assume this program of work has continued in consolidating systems in our health agencies to this date.*

*Please would you consider giving me this data in tranches by year, if that is easier from your side? Tranches by Wellington/Dunedin/Whanganui sources too may easier as well. Comma separated files are reasonably efficient in size and it is easy to create exports in this format in the Financials system.*

Information pertaining to the 2022/23 financial year is more closely connected to the functions ('Sector Operations' as it was then called) which were transferred to the new agency Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora and stood up on 1 July 2022. Therefore, payee information for that financial year in your request is held by that agency. As such, I have decided to transfer this part of your request to their agency under section 14(b)(ii) of the Act.

I reiterate that for the financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22 in which Sector Operations was a function within the Ministry, we did not operate a single database system that would enable the detailed information to be easily retrieved by way of a simple extract/export as you suggest in your original request.

For context, your request would require a search through a very large volume of payee information and transactions for an annual spend of \$22+billion a year. Despite your view, payees are not companies-only but are also made up of individuals who received payments administered by Sector Operations e.g. disability carers, midwives etc. This means the Ministry must review all transactions to assess what payees personal information is held across our databases and determine what, if any, detailed payee information could be released against the scope of your request.

I am not quite sure of the relevance of your reference to the number of Sector Operation offices, other than inferring that this would make any extract of information easier for the team because there are only three offices? The information is not held by way of individual office and therefore cannot be undertaken in the manner you have suggested.

To expedite the detailed payee information that you have requested across such a significant annual spend would place an unreasonable level of pressure on a team who support the day-to-day functions of the Ministry. I am not aware of any overriding public interest in providing such detailed information given we have already provided you with a link to the Ministry's Annual Reports, audited by Audit NZ for the two financial years requested.

Therefore, your request for detailed payee information as you have listed is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, as it would require a substantial amount of collation to provide the information as you have requested. I have considered whether charging or extending the time to compile the information would enable us to respond. However, I do not believe it is in the public interest to do so.

The Ministry remains willing to work with you on a refined request.

I trust this information fulfils your request. If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request with us, including this decision, please feel free to contact the OIA Services Team on: [oiagr@health.govt.nz](mailto:oiagr@health.govt.nz).

Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by calling 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Fergus Welsh  
**Acting Deputy Director-General**  
**Corporate Services – Te Pou Tiaki**