



18 November 2024

P Robins
fyi-request-28755-521a2b68@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear P Robins

Thank you for your Official Information Act request, received on 15 October 2024. You requested:

I request any communications you have sent or received since 15 April 2024 with any of the following:

- *Tim Brown*
- *Diane Calvert*
- *Ray Chung*
- *Tony Randle*
- *Nicola Young*

Information being released

Please find enclosed the following documents:

Item	Date	Document Description	Decision
1.	23 June 2024	Email: FW: We can't afford cancer drugs, but can afford THIS?! ??????	Release in full
2.	24 July 2024	Email: RE: Casino for Wellington	Release in part
3.	19 September 2024	Email: Wellington City Insurance Fund	Release in full

I have decided to release the documents listed above, subject to information being withheld under the following section of the Official Information Act, as applicable: section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased natural persons.

In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Official Information Act.

This reply addresses the information you requested. You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nicola Willis'.

Hon Nicola Willis
Minister of Finance

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From: Councillor Ray Chung <Ray.Chung@wcc.govt.nz>
Sent: Sunday, 23 June 2024 6:58 pm
To: Nicola Willis
Subject: FW: We can't afford cancer drugs, but can afford THIS?! ?????

Hi Nicola

Is this Shane Reti's decision? It seems to me that National is still following the previous government's wokeness and not treating all New Zealanders equally as these new cancer-treating drugs would help those in need and not based on race!

Cheers, Ray

From: Jordan Williams <team@taxpayers.org.nz>
Sent: Wednesday, June 19, 2024 12:32 PM
To: Councillor Ray Chung <ray.chung@wcc.govt.nz>
Subject: We can't afford cancer drugs, but can afford THIS?! 🧑

⚠️ TRIGGER WARNING: This is what your taxpayer dollars are being spent on...



Dear Councillor Ray,

While cancer patients wait for the Government to "find the money" to fund desperately needed modern drugs, the very money meant for health research and saving lives is being flushed down the toilet.

At our weekly staff meeting this morning, the research team took me through the latest batch of grant funding decisions by the Health Research Council.

My heart sunk, Councillor Ray.

I wanted to get the information in front of you ASAP so you can judge for yourself. [I'm emailing to ask for your support so we can expose the wasteful spending and force the Government to redirect the cash to modern cancer medicines.](#)

Councillor Ray, you won't believe the nonsense Wellington is getting away with!



But first, let's remind ourselves what the Health Research Council is.

According to their website, their purpose is to "support **high-quality, high-impact research** by investing in People, Ideas and Priorities." They describe themselves as "the home of health research in New Zealand" and "here to improve the health and wellbeing of all New Zealanders through our process of identifying and **supporting high-quality, high-value research** that delivers far-reaching impact within the health and science landscape."

You can see where this is going...

Here are a few examples of just the first round of 2024 funding:

Hapai te hauora: Breathing your ancestors into life
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"Hāpai te hauora' as 'breathing your ancestors into life', captures the breadth & connections of a generation – rangatahi Māori—a generation moving forward together. This proposal builds on an HRC funded project (18/651) exploring the ways rangatahi Māori make sense of & live hāpai te hauora through navigating journeys of hauora & wellbeing."

Approved funding: \$649,992

Sounds like high quality science! 🙏

Timely access to rongoa Māori in cancer care services for Māori

"Prior to Europeans arriving in Aotearoa, traditional Māori way of healing was the only hauora practice Māori knew. Today, traditional Māori healing is known as Rongoā Māori. Rongoā Māori is diverse and can include karakia [prayer], wai [water], waiata [music], himene [hymns], access to the ngahere [forest] and whenua [land].

For Māori health consumers, patients and whānau accessing cancer care service; seldom they are made aware of or referred early to rongoā Māori practitioners at the beginning of their cancer care journey.

Using tikanga Māori methodology and codesign with Māori health and iwi providers, our method will include interviews, and hui with rongoā Māori practitioners, Māori and Iwi providers, Māori health consumers, patients, their whānau, and health professionals in primary and secondary care in the MidCentral region to explore ways for timely access to rongoā Māori in cancer care services for Māori."

Approved funding: \$398,771

Rather than fund the actual cancer medicines, the Government is funding "timely access" to ~~cancer treatments~~ witch-doctor cancer treatments. Ka pai!

If that doesn't work, there is always music therapy 🎵

He Whiringa Māramatanga: Kaupapa Māori Music and healing

"He Whiringa Māramatanga' examines Kaupapa Māori music theories and practices as a pathway to accelerating Māori well-being. Music theory is primarily located within Western music notation, harmony, and tonality. However, Māori Music, particularly through oral forms such as waiata, karakia, ruruku, haka, pūrākau and whakapapa, illustrate that Māori have unique key elements of musical theories to create oral legacies and that traditional Western definitions of 'music' may be confining for true Māori creative expression."

Approved funding: \$377,550

Or maybe barbershop is more your [cancer's] thing? 🎤 🎸

Health Promotion Interventions for Pacific men in a Barbershop

"A rapid review and qualitative interviews with Pacific men, Pacific health promoters and Pacific barbers will inform the development of a Pacific health promoting behaviour change framework and intervention programme in a barbershop setting owned by a Pacific health provider. This first of its kind research in New Zealand brings together an underserved population, a non-traditional setting for health promotion and culturally unique health promotion interventions delivered by an unconventional health and wellbeing workforce (barbers)."

Approved funding: \$150,000

Or how about, rather than fixing hospitals, or building nicer family waiting rooms, we splurge \$150k on a study to *understand* the space?! Thanks to the Health Research Council, a very well paid 'space cadet' is coming to the rescue. 🏠

Building room for equity: Culture centred design of hospital waiting rooms

"Hospitals in Aotearoa New Zealand have a legacy founded in colonialism and are designed to Eurocentric principles of health and well-being – as such they are inequitable by design and represent culturally unsafe spaces for many people who need to access them. Hospital waiting rooms represent one such space. Our project is premised on understanding how physical spaces in hospitals shape people's experiences of care."

Approved funding: \$150,000

For our religious taxpayers, there's one for you too! 🙏

Research into Hine te Iwaiwa (who was the wife of Tinirau and is known as the spiritual guardian of childbirth who assists at the entrance into, and the exits from this world) is, as we understand it, ~~worth a lot of money~~ cutting-edge science.

Guided by Hine te Iwaiwa: Exploring Maramataka [traditional Māori lunar calendar] influence on pregnancy Outcomes

"This research aims to explore the effects of incorporating the maramataka, a traditional Māori lunar calendar system guided by the goddess Hine te Iwaiwa, into the context of pregnancy care for wāhine Māori and Maori Midwives."

Approved funding: \$400,000

And then there's the help for our Pacific friends. 🌴

Remember, these grants are not for *front-line services* to help Pacific communities, but rather to "*support high-quality, high-impact research*"...

Development of a Fijian Model of Health

"The research seeks to develop a Fijian Health Model to address Fijian peoples health in Aotearoa New Zealand."

Approved funding: \$649,561

Here's a thought: why not get New Zealand's own health model right (to serve everyone living here) before we start ethnic segmentation of our health system?

Then there's this grant, for nothing other than to support an academic's professional development!

He Kaakaakura Whakamaatau [Translation: An Experimental Green]

"This programme of senior leadership research and training for Dr Belinda Borell will build on her expertise in kaupapa Māori research and enable her to pursue a development and capacity building plan to grow both her expertise and that of emerging researchers. Focusing on historical trauma, mixed methods will explore poverty and abuse in care."

Approved funding: \$649,997

We had a quick look into Dr Borell. If you thought her work was, well, scientific, I've got some bad news.

This is her Massey University profile:

*Belinda (Ngati Ranginui, Ngai Te Rangi, Whakatōhea) has recently completed her PhD, **The Nature of the Gaze: a conceptual discussion of societal privilege from an indigenous perspective**. The thesis explores how Kaupapa Māori paradigms can make important contributions to research topics that may not be of direct or immediate relevance to Māori communities. Insights gained from a Kaupapa Māori investigation of white privilege in Aotearoa New Zealand are discussed. The thesis argues that cultural hegemony is maintained through structured forgetting, silence, and suppression of dissent which has dire consequences for dominant cultural groups as well as marginal. Structural racism and privilege are amenable to*

analyses utilising similar frameworks albeit from opposite sides that can provide valuable insights to understanding inequity more broadly. I also examine ways in which Kaupapa Māori analyses of white privilege can illuminate pathways of redress that will benefit all New Zealanders and provide more embracing perspectives of nationhood.

Dr Borell was also recently awarded the Hohua Tutengaehe Postdoctoral Fellowship from the Health Research Council of New Zealand to further her research into societal privilege.

Congratulations to Belinda for the \$649,997 for her 'professional development'. Who knew naval gazing paid so well!? 🤔 🍷

Councillor Ray, that's just a taste!

Councillor Ray, these are just a selection of the nutty grants that the Taxpayers' Union will be highlighting over the coming weeks.

But make no mistake, while we can laugh about the decisions being made in Wellington, for the parents of those kids sitting on oncology wards, there is no humour in this.

More than \$30 million of the Health Research Council's annual budget of \$125 million seems to have very little to do with health. That money alone is nearly half what is needed to fund the 13 cancer drugs that weren't in last month's budget.

The cancer drugs are not unaffordable, Councillor Ray, it's a matter of priority.

[If you agree that the sorts of grants listed above are not a good use of your money, I'm asking you to chip in so we can put an end to this madness and redirect this money to front-line health and actual scientific research.](#)

Support us to force the Government to take on the academic establishment and vested interests running these rorts

We all know the "experts" will scream to the media the moment the Government touches so-called "science money". That's why the Taxpayers' Union is needed to counter their spin and expose outfits like the "Health Research Council" for what they're doing with our money.

Like so much in government, things get captured. The Health Research Council is now just a group of self-interested academics giving our money to other self-interested academics (if you can call them that).

Councillor Ray, will you support the Taxpayers' Union to force fiscal reprioritisation so that this money goes to *actual* scientific research and front-line medicines like cancer drugs?

[>>> Donate to the campaign <<<](#)

While Nicola Willis can shift some of the blame for the underfunding of Pharmac onto the last Labour Government, it simply isn't good enough to suggest there isn't enough to plug the gap, when we are still spraying money up the wall on nonsense like this. [She needs political pressure to make the tough decisions and push back against the woke bureaucracy and academic establishment making these decisions.](#)

As you can see, Councillor Ray, the money isn't going to where they say it is. We can win this – [are you with me?](#)

Thank you for your support.



Jordan

Jordan Williams
Executive Director
New Zealand Taxpayers' Union

[ps. The Taxpayers' Union can only hold the Government's feet to the fire with support from people like you. Make a secure and confidential donation here so we](#)

can force the Government to take on the "academic establishment" running these rorts.

New Zealand Taxpayers' Union Inc. · 117 Lambton Quay, Level 4, Wellington 6011, New Zealand
This email was sent to ray.chung@nzta.govt.nz. To change your email preferences, [click here](#).
Authorised by the New Zealand Taxpayers' Union, Level 4, 117 Lambton Quay, Wellington 6011.

From: Councillor Ray Chung <Ray.Chung@wcc.govt.nz>
Sent: Wednesday, 24 July 2024 2:34 pm
To: Nicola Willis
Cc: ^Parliament: Celia Horner; Brooke van Velden (MIN)
Subject: RE: Casino for Wellington

Hi s9(2)(a)

Many thanks and much appreciated.

Looking forward to hearing from Brooke

Cheers, Ray

From: s9(2)(a) **On Behalf Of** Nicola Willis
Sent: Wednesday, July 24, 2024 12:46 PM
To: Councillor Ray Chung <Ray.Chung@wcc.govt.nz>; Nicola Willis <Nicola.Willis@parliament.govt.nz>
Cc: Celia Horner <Celia.Horner@parliament.govt.nz>; Brooke van Velden (MIN) <B.vanVelden@ministers.govt.nz>
Subject: RE: Casino for Wellington

Good afternoon Councillor Ray Chung,

On behalf of the Hon Nicola Willis, Minister of Finance, Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Social Investment and Associate Minister of Climate Change, thank you for your recent email. Please be assured your comments have been noted.

As the issues you raise fall within the portfolio responsibilities of Hon Brooke van Velden, Minister for Internal Affairs, I have referred your email to her office for their information.

Kind regards, thank you for your patience.



s9(2)(a)

Roving Private Secretary (Executive Support) | Office of Hon Nicola Willis

Email: s9(2)(a) **Website:** www.Beehive.govt.nz
Private Bag 18041, Parliament Buildings, Wellington 6160, New Zealand

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From: Councillor Ray Chung <Ray.Chung@wcc.govt.nz>
Sent: Wednesday, June 26, 2024 1:25 PM
To: Nicola Willis <Nicola.Willis@parliament.govt.nz>
Cc: Celia Horner <Celia.Horner@parliament.govt.nz>
Subject: Casino for Wellington

Hi Nicola and Celia

We've just finished discussing Takina, our Conference Centre and looking at ways of improving the utility of it and stop or at least slow the continuing losses on it. One idea that came up was to build a casino in there as we consider that as the capital city, it seems that we should have one here.

It's not that we're not considering the oft-discussed negative sides of problem gamblers but many countries and cities have come up with solutions for this such as Singapore.

I recall some years ago, central government decided that there would be a moratorium on building a new casino in Wellington but this had a finite length of time. Has this moratorium expired now and if so, could we start a discussion on this?

Many thanks and looking forward to catching up at the Ethnic Community meeting at Johnsonville next week.

Cheers, Ray

Rayward R Chung

Wellington City Councillor
Onslow Western ward
Wellington City Council

M s9(2)(a)
E ray.chung@wcc.govt.nz
W wellington.govt.nz

Absolutely Positively
Wellington City Council
Me Heke Ki Pōneke

From: Councillor Tim Brown <Tim.Brown@wcc.govt.nz>
Sent: Thursday, 19 September 2024 11:15 pm
To: Nicola Willis
Subject: Wellington City Insurance Fund

Nicola

Outstanding performance last night. I bet no one disputed the key message about the need for step-change.

That certainly extends to Wellington. Amongst other things Council faces crucial decisions about housing and water.

We simply must find ways to improve the availability of affordable and social housing.

It's critical that we make wise decisions with our water infrastructure and operations to minimise the cost to Wellingtonians.

But, before they become centre stage, Council's finances!

With a particular focus on the establishment of an Insurance Fund capitalised with the sale of Wellington based assets (land and airport company shares).

It would be incredibly helpful if you were willing to announce the following in your capacity as a Wellingtonian and MoF.

- Wellington ratepayers need Council to make prudent sensible financial decisions. This isn't just about wasteful spending, it extends to good management of Council's assets.
- For Wellington, the choice between owning land and airport shares or a professionally managed diversified investment fund should be obvious. The latter will involve far less risk and almost certainly higher returns.
- Treasury has estimated that the cost to the Christchurch Council of rebuilding after the 2011 earthquakes is in the vicinity of \$14 billion (in 2024 dollars) While Wellington City Council is investing in earthquake strengthening its properties, it needs to also prepare for rebuilding. Council's finances are stretched and crucially it only has about \$800 million of insurance cover. Its ability to fund reconstruction is severely inadequate. Central Government would of course play a part in rebuilding the Capital after a natural disaster, but much of the cost will be borne by Council and the people of Wellington. Wellington City Council has an unarguable need to establish an insurance fund. It really has no alternative if it is to have any chance of restoring the City after a natural disaster and giving private investors confidence to also invest.
- Recognising the concerns of Wellingtonians that the money put aside in an insurance funds could be either invested poorly or spent on vanity projects Government will help by:
 - Assisting with locking the fund up so that the principal can only be used for disaster recovery. This includes passing legislation if that is desirable to provide certainty.
 - Requesting that the NZ Superannuation Fund investigate undertaking the management of council investment funds (not just for Wellington). So that residents can have confidence that their capital is being managed by a world class fund manager.
 - Requesting that Treasury undertake further work on a framework to help councils better understand their disaster risks and who would have to pay for restoration.

A statement from you with some or all of the above points would be very helpful. To support and encourage councillors to make sensible decisions, and to remind the public of what is in their best interest.

I'm available to sit down with your officials to explain the details of what is now planned.

Councillors are to redebate and vote on this matter on 10th October and it would be very desirable for your position to be made public before then.

Thanks

Tim