



14 May 2026

26-OIAD-00993

Nigel Gray
fyi-request-33794-9b24ed16@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe Nigel

Thank you for your email of 15 April 2026 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), from the Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry):

information relating to the preparation of the Minister’s response to my correspondence (PS-COR1780 / 26-CORM-00148), and the associated Ministerials that were templated from it (including but not limited to PS-COR1794, PS-COR1796, PS-COR1799, COR1780, COR1839, 26-CORM-00200, 26-CORM-00204).

I address each part of your request in turn below.

1. Staff involved

1.1 Please provide the full list of all staff (roles, not names) who worked on drafting, reviewing, editing, approving, or managing the response to PS COR1780 / 26 CORM 00148 and the associated templated Ministerials.

1.2 For each role, please provide:

- **job title**
- **team / business unit**
- **classification (e.g., advisor, senior advisor, manager, SME, etc.)**
- **whether the role is considered a “subject matter expert” under MfE’s internal definitions**

The table below shows the role title, team/business unit and pay band associated with each of the cohorts of staff involved in the preparation of the reply to PS-COR1780/26-CORM-00148. Pay band information is sought in point 3 of your request below but is supplied here for ease of reference.

Role Title	Team Name and Business Group	Pay band
Manager	Policy Evidence Strategy, Stewardship and Performance	Band 19
Manager	Marine Environmental Management and Adaptation	\$142,185.11 to \$172,853.54
Manager	Sector Policy and Finance Environmental Management and Adaptation	
Manager	Data and Science Content Strategy, Stewardship and Performance	Or
Manager	Net Zero / Climate Systems Climate Change and Resource Efficiency	Band 20 \$166,575.86 to \$202,236.22

Private Secretary	Office of the Minister for the Environment	Band 17 \$110,501.66 to \$134,128.88 Or Band 18 \$119,974.45 to \$ 145,706.73
Team Leader	Ministerial Services Office of Chief Executive	
Principal Advisor	Policy Evidence Strategy, Stewardship and Performance	
Senior Advisor	Ministerial Services Office of Chief Executive	
Senior Advisor	Data and Science Content Strategy, Stewardship and Performance	
Senior Advisor	Sector Policy and Finance Environmental Management and Adaptation	
Advisor	Ministerial Services Office of the Chief Executive	Band 15 \$80,712.37 to \$97,721.21
Advisor	Ministerial Services Office of the Chief Executive	
Advisor	Policy Evidence Strategy, Stewardship and Performance	
Advisor	Sector Policy and Finance Environmental Management and Adaptation	

Some roles and pay bands have been merged in accordance with section 9(2)(a) of the Act to protect the privacy of natural persons. In terms of section 9(1) of the Act, I am satisfied that, in the circumstances, the withholding of information in this request is not outweighed by other considerations that render it desirable to make the information available in the public interest.

The subject matter expert definition is discussed in the next section.

2. SME designation

2.1 Please provide the Ministry’s definition of “SME” (subject matter expert) as used in Ministerial drafting processes.

2.2 Please provide the criteria used to assign SME status to staff.

2.3 Please confirm which staff involved in this response were designated as SMEs, and on what basis.

2.4 Please confirm whether any scientific, technical, or professional subject matter experts (e.g., atmospheric scientists, aerosol specialists, maritime emissions experts, hazard mitigation specialists, NIWA, MetService, EPA, Maritime NZ technical staff) were consulted at any stage.

2.5 If no scientific SMEs were consulted, please provide the Ministry’s reasoning for this.

Ministerial Services is the team within the Ministry tasked with preparing responses to correspondence and requests for official information, among other duties. The term subject matter expert or ‘SME’ is used generally by Ministerial Services to refer to staff in policy, operational or delivery teams that work with subject matter most closely linked to the topic raised by the requestor (whether through a piece of correspondence or request for official information).

The term is not formally defined, nor is there specific criteria that are assessed or must be met to designate staff subject matter experts. The information sought does not exist and is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the Act.

For the purpose of responding to ministerial correspondence PS-COR1780/26-CORM-00148, staff outside of Ministerial Services were considered subject matter experts as they work in policy, operational or delivery teams that manage subject matter most closely linked to the topic raised. No staff involved in preparing the response have the job titles specified in point 2.4 above, nor were staff from the agencies, cited in point 2.4, consulted in preparing the response.

The information you are seeking in point 2.5 of your request is not held by the Ministry and would require an opinion to be formed in order to respond. The Act enables people to request information from Ministers and agencies, including the Ministry. However, the Act only applies to information that is already held by the Ministry. There is no obligation on the Ministry to create information, or to form an opinion, in order to respond to a request.

3. Staff time and cost

3.1 Please provide the total number of staff hours spent preparing the response to PS COR1780 / 26 CORM 00148 and the associated templated Ministerials.

3.2 Please provide the total cost to the Ministry, including:

- **staff time**
- **managerial review**
- **Ministerial Services processing**
- **SME review**
- **Minister's Office processing.**

3.3 If the Ministry does not hold a consolidated total, please provide:

- **the hourly rate band for each role involved**
- **the estimated time spent by each role**
- **the Ministry's standard costing method for Ministerial correspondence.**

The Ministry does not record the time spent, or cost associated with, preparing responses to ministerial or departmental correspondence. On this basis, the Ministry cannot estimate the time spent responding to each piece of correspondence. The Ministry does not have a 'standard costing method of Ministerial correspondence'. The information sought does not exist and is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the Act.

Refer to the table in point 1 above for the pay bands for roles involved in preparing the response to ministerial correspondence PS-COR1780/26-CORM-00148.

4. Process and workflow

4.1 Please provide any internal documents that describe:

- **how Ministerial responses are costed**
- **how staff time is recorded**

- **how SME involvement is determined**
- **how Ministerial drafting teams are assigned**

4.2 Please confirm whether the Ministry considers the preparation of PS COR1780 / 26 CORM 00148 to have been:

- **routine**
- **complex**
- **escalated**
- **cross team**
- **cross agency.**

No internal documents describe how Ministerial responses are costed or staff time is recorded exist, therefore your request for this information is refused under section 18(e) of the Act.

Paragraphs 8 to 11 of the Ministerial Correspondence Process document discuss how subject matter expert involvement and assignment occur. I am releasing this information to you as an excerpt as per section 16(1)(e) of the Act. Staff names are withheld under section 9(2)(g)(ii) of the Act. In terms of section 9(1) of the Act, I am satisfied that, in the circumstances, the withholding of information in this request is not outweighed by other considerations that render it desirable to make the information available in the public interest.

The information sought in part 4.2 of your request is not held by the Ministry and would require an opinion to be formed in order to respond. The Act enables people to request information from Ministers and agencies, including the Ministry. However, the Act only applies to information that is already held by the Ministry. There is no obligation on the Ministry to create information, or to form an opinion, in order to respond to a request.

4.3 Please provide any internal assessment of the resource impact of handling multiple “ship emissions correspondence items” simultaneously.

The information sought does not exist and is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the Act.

5. Templating

5.1 Please confirm the date on which the Minister’s Office instructed the Ministry to use the draft response to PS COR1780 as the template for all other ship emissions correspondence.

5.2 Please provide any internal documents discussing:

- **the decision to template**
- **the rationale for templating**
- **the implications of templating for accuracy, scientific integrity, or public transparency.**

On 20 February 2026, the Office of the Minister for the Environment confirmed that the response to ministerial correspondence PS-COR1780/26-CORM-00148 would be used as the template for responses to additional ministerial correspondence received on the same topic (COR1794, COR1796, COR1799 and COR1839 refer). That same email instructed the Ministry to close off the additional correspondence from our end (i.e. no further action was required from the Ministry).

That email is the only document within scope of this part of your request. The email was released to you, under the Act, on 14 April 2026, (OIA Response 26-OIAD-00732 refers). I invite you to review Document 23, which is available on the [FYI website](#). As the document is publicly available, your request for it is refused under section 18(d) of the Act.

6. Monitoring and evidence

6.1 Please confirm whether the Ministry holds any internal guidance on the use of the phrase “does not hold any evidence” in situations where the Ministry does not monitor or study the phenomenon in question.

6.2 If such guidance exists, please provide it.

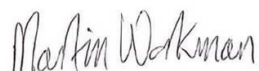
6.3 If such guidance does not exist, please confirm this explicitly.

The information sought does not exist and is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the Act.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Office of the Ombudsman of my decisions relating to this request, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. The relevant details can be found a.

Please note that due to the public interest in our work, the Ministry publishes responses to requests for official information shortly after the response has been sent on our website at: <https://environment.govt.nz/about-us/official-information-act-requests/>. If you have any queries about this, please feel free to contact our Ministerial Services team at: ministerials@mfe.govt.nz.

Nāku noa, nā



Martin Workman

Chief of Staff

Ministry for the Environment | Manatū Mō Te Taiao

Document schedule

#	Date	Code	Title	Decision	Grounds	Link/Notes
1	N/A	N/A	Ministerial Correspondence Process document	Released in part Released as an excerpt (Section 16(1))	Section 9(2)(g)(ii)	
2	20 February 2026	N/A	PS-COR1794 and PS-COR1799 Extension	Refused in full	Section 18(d)	Ministerial statement preparation and internal communications - a Official Information Act request to Ministry for the Environment - FYI