



20 March 2026

26-OIAD-00449

Nigel Gray

Tēnā koe Nigel

Thank you for your email of 23 February 2026 making the following request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) of the Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry):

1. Prior admission of non-monitoring

In a ministerial response to me (date: 16 January 2026, reference: 25-OIAD-00029 , the Ministry confirmed that:

Maritime New Zealand does not monitor ship emissions, and the Ministry for the Environment does not hold monitoring systems or datasets relating to ship-generated atmospheric emissions.

This establishes that no monitoring is undertaken.

2. Subsequent claim of “no evidence”

In a separate ministerial response dated 23 February 2026 to Mr Pete Buxton (reference PS-COR1794/26-CORM-00148), the Minister stated:

“The Ministry for the Environment does not hold any evidence to suggest that localised instances of atmospheric emissions pollution contribute directly to localised weather events.”

This statement appears to rely on the absence of evidence, despite the Ministry’s earlier admission that no monitoring is conducted that could generate such evidence.

I therefore request the following information:

1. Monitoring and data holdings

1.1 All documents, reports, internal emails, briefing notes, or datasets held by the Ministry that relate to monitoring of ship emissions (including SO_x, NO_x, particulates, CO₂, and other atmospheric pollutants) from 1 January 2015 to the present.

1.2 Any documents that record or describe decisions not to monitor ship emissions, including the reasons for those decisions.

2. Basis for the “no evidence” statement

2.1 All scientific advice, internal communications, briefing notes, or other material used to support the Minister’s statement that the Ministry “does not hold any evidence” that localised emissions contribute to localised weather events.

2.2 Any documents that explain how the Ministry distinguishes between:

“no evidence because the phenomenon has been investigated”, and

“no evidence because the Ministry does not monitor or study the phenomenon.”

3. Reconciliation of the two ministerial positions

3.1 Any internal analysis, discussion, or advice addressing how the Ministry reconciles: the admission that ship emissions are not monitored, with the public statement that the Ministry “does not hold any evidence” regarding the effects of ship emissions on localised weather events.

3.2 Any documents that discuss whether the “no evidence” statement could be

misleading in cases where the Ministry does not collect data.

4. Policy and communication guidance

4.1 Any internal guidance, policy documents, or communication protocols that instruct staff on the use of the phrase “does not hold any evidence” in ministerial correspondence.

4.2 Any documents that specify whether officials are required to disclose non-monitoring when making “no evidence” statements.

Part 1.1 of the request

I have identified five documents in scope of Part 1.1 of your request, as listed in the document schedule below.

I am releasing three documents to you in full.

I am refusing two documents in full under section 18(d) of the Act as they are already publicly available, as per the links in the document schedule below.

Further information and links

Air quality management in New Zealand is governed by the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) and involves a number of agencies. The Minister for the Environment is responsible for recommending national environmental standards to guarantee a set level of protection for the health of all New Zealanders. Regional councils and unitary authorities are in turn responsible for ensuring that national standards are met in their regions - this includes monitoring air quality.

The Government introduced the national environmental standards for air quality (NESAQ) in 2004 and amended these in 2011. The NESAQ places a requirement on regional and unitary councils to monitor air quality and to report exceedances to the public (see regulation 15 and schedule 2).

You may also find the following web pages useful:

- <https://www.lawa.org.nz/learn/factsheets/air-quality-topic/monitoring-air-quality-in-new-zealand>.
- <https://environment.govt.nz/publications/our-air-2024/>.
- <https://www.imo.org/en/ourwork/environment/pages/2023-imo-strategy-on-reduction-of-ghg-emissions-from-ships.aspx>
- <https://www.phfscience.nz/media/kvkd2jul/esr-environmental-health-report-mount-maunganui-air-quality-review.pdf>

You may also find useful the Government’s work on including international shipping emissions in the 2050 target under the Climate Change Response Act 2002, which you can read about at: <https://environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/Combined-2050-emissions-reductions-targets.pdf> on Pages 124-145.

Remainder of the request

I am refusing the remaining parts of your request under section 18(e) of the Act on the grounds that the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

Any further requests for information regarding the definition of 'does not exist', 'does not hold evidence', or 'information is not held', may be refused under section 18(h) of the Act on the grounds that the request is frivolous or vexatious or that the information requested is trivial.

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 at: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

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



Hayden Johnston
General Manager – Natural Environment
Ministry for the Environment | Manatū Mō Te Taiao

Document schedule

#	Date	Title	Decision	Grounds	Link/Notes
1	29-03-18	National Air Emissions Inventory 2015	Refused in full	18(d)	https://environment.govt.nz/publications/national-air-emissions-inventory/ More information on the monitoring of air quality can be found at: https://www.stats.govt.nz/indicators/air-pollutant-emissions/
2	23-09-19	Impacts of emissions from shipping	Released in full		This document was provided to the Ministry by the Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences, which is now a part of Earth Sciences New Zealand. More information on these matters can be found at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.uclim.2014.06.003 https://www.knowledgeauckland.org.nz/publications/source-apportionment-and-trend-analysis-of-air-particulate-matter-in-the-auckland-region/
3	24-02-21	Historical development and councils' interactions with Whareroa Marae and the Mount Maunganui Industrial Area	Released in full		This document was provided to the Ministry by the Bay of Plenty Regional Council ahead of the Mount Maunganui Air Quality Working Party meeting on 3 March 2021.
4	24-02-21	Particulate Matter Synopsis within the Mount Maunganui Airshed	Released in full		This document was provided to the Ministry by the Bay of Plenty Regional Council ahead of the Mount Maunganui Air Quality Working Party meeting on 3 March 2021.
5	22-11-22	Minutes of the Mount Maunganui Air Quality Working Party	Refused in full	18(d)	https://atlas.boprc.govt.nz/api/v1/edms/document/A4262372/content More information on the Mount Maunganui Air Quality Working Party's work can be found at: https://www.boprc.govt.nz/environment/air/mount-maunganui-air-quality/mount-air-quality-working-party/