



15 May 2026

nicegoodfaith
fyi-request-34224-9f957a8d@requests.fyi.org.nz

Our ref: OIA 131266

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request: Civil Refugee and Immigration legal aid

Thank you for your email of 24 March 2026, requesting legal aid information relating to Civil Refugee and Immigration matters including asylum.

On 23 April 2026, I contacted you to confirm that your request was being responded to in two tranches and provided the initial Tranche 1 information.

As a reminder Tranche 2 relates to the following requests:

2. Data on checking whether lawyers genuinely reviewed applicant evidence Please provide the following data for each financial year:

2.1 the number of cases in which you checked, spot-checked, audited, or reviewed the hours claimed by asylum legal aid lawyers for reviewing applicant evidence and supporting documents;

2.2 among the above cases, the number of cases in which, after checking, it was determined that the hours claimed by the lawyer for reviewing applicant evidence and supporting documents needed to be adjusted.

4. Data relating to legal aid lawyers applying for increased evidence translation/interpreting budget Please provide the following data for each financial year:

4.1 the number of cases in which legal aid lawyers applied for an increase in the budget for translation/interpreting of evidence and supporting documents;

4.2 among the above applications, the number of cases that were approved;

4.3 the median translation/interpreting cost for evidence and supporting documents across all RSU initial-stage asylum legal aid cases.

Before responding to your remaining requests, first I must apologise for the delay in responding to you. Thank you for your patience and please see my response below.

In response to **Request 2**, please see **Table 1** below for data on Civil Refugee and Immigration cases audited by the Ministry of Justice. I can advise that since 1 July 2018, there have been no

concerns identified with the hours claimed, but in 2019/20 four of the five audited files contained financial irregularities. However, these issues related to high-level file management and billing matters, including poor documentation of private payments and insufficient records supporting certain claimed time.

When considering Table 1, it is important to note that all legal aid providers are subject to audit, however, only a select number of cases assigned to the provider/s are audited. Additionally, the number of approved Civil Refugee and Immigration providers is limited. As a result, the number of audits completed for Civil Refugee and Immigration cases may appear to seem low or inconsistent. More information about the audit process can be found on the website: [Audits](#).

Turning to **Request 4**, please see **Table 2** below for information on if legal aid lawyers applied for additional funding, for translation and interpreting of evidence for Civil Refugee and Immigration matters, through an Amendment to Grant (ATG).

For context, providers are initially granted funding when a legal aid application is approved. Where additional funding is required to support the client's case, for example translation and interpreting services are required, the provider may apply for further funding to cover these services. More information about the granting of legal aid and ATGs can be found in the [Legal Aid Grants Handbook](#).

Please note that this response with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry of Justice website at: [Official Information Act responses](#).

If you are not satisfied with this response, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman under section 28 of the Official Information Act 1982. The Office of the Ombudsman may be contacted by phone on: 0800 802 602, by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz, or via the webform: [Make a complaint](#).

Nāku noa, nā



Tracey Baguley
Legal Services Commissioner

Appendix One

Table 1: The number of cases audited for hours claimed by Civil Refugee and Immigration providers, split by financial year from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2025

2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
0	5	0	0	0	0	5

Notes:

- This data is extracted from a live dataset and is therefore subject to change. The extract reflects the data as at 9 April 2026.
- Data may be incomplete for years prior to 2022/23, due to how asylum matters are recorded on the legal aid system under Civil jurisdiction.
- Audited files only relate to cases that were closed at the time of audit. Open or ongoing cases are not included in these figures.
- Five cases are intended to be audited for this area of law in 2025/26.

Table 2: The number of Amendments to Grant (ATG) for translation or interpreter services, for Civil Refugee and Immigration matters, by number of cases and disbursements, and median cost, split by financial year from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2025

Description	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Number of cases with ATGs	45	58	54	51	55	116	140
Number of approved ATG disbursements	61	71	72	64	69	142	174
Median cost of ATGs	\$780	\$620	\$965	\$1,200	\$1,000	\$1,200	\$880

Notes:

- This data is extracted from a live dataset and is therefore subject to change. The extract reflects the data as at 9 April 2026.
- Public Defence Service (PDS) providers are excluded from this dataset.
- Individual cases may involve multiple ATGs and associated disbursements for translation and interpreting services. As a result, the number of approved ATG disbursements may exceed the number of cases.
- This data includes only Standard legal aid provider approvals and therefore excludes One-Off, Limited, and Temporary provider approvals, and is limited to providers where the area of law approval is "Civil Refugee & Immigration" only.
- The data is limited to providers with approvals effective from at least 30 June and ending at the close of the relevant financial year.
- The median cost of ATGs refers to the median cost requested for ATG disbursements limited to matters with the types 'ref status appeal auth', 'refugee and protection status', or 'refugee status'.
- To identify the disbursement type, key word searches were used, meaning results depend on the information was received and recorded. As a result, some translator or interpreter service disbursements may not have been identified. In particular:
 - invoices without custom comments identifying them as translator/interpreter services may exist and are therefore not included, and
 - some disbursements may contain additional components that account for only part of the total invoice amount.