



Te Kawa Mataaho

Public Service Commission

3 July 2026

Penny Marie

fyi-request-34887-6262324f@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Penny

Official Information Act Request

Our ref: OIA 2026-0166

I refer to your Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) request dated 9 June 2026 for:

"I write pursuant to the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) to request information held by Te Kawa Mataaho | Public Service Commission (the Commission). I am an investigative journalist acting in the public interest under the name Penny Marie NZ. My reporting focuses on public accountability and the administration of public health policy in New Zealand.

This request is one of three complementary OIA requests filed as part of a coordinated public-interest inquiry. A primary OIA has been filed with Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora regarding the January 2024 rainbow cervical screening campaign materials HE1191 and HE1192, which replaced the terms "women" and "female" with "people with a cervix." This secondary request is directed to the Commission to establish whether any whole-of-government guidance, standard, or directive issued by the Commission required or recommended the removal of sex-based language from public-facing government health communications - as distinct from internal employment or workplace policies.

I note the following relevant legislative and policy context: section 75 of the Public Service Act 2020 requires chief executives to foster inclusive workplaces; and guidance published on Digital.govt.nz under the heading "Gender-inclusive language" instructs government agencies to use gender-neutral language and to "not reference gender unless absolutely necessary." It is a matter of public interest to understand whether such guidance was intended to apply to clinical or health-promotion materials addressing sex-specific conditions.

1. Whole-of-Government Language Guidance

1.1 Guidance, Circulars and Standards

Please provide:

All guidance notes, circulars, standards or directives issued by the Commission between 1 January 2018 and 31 January 2024 that recommended or required the use of gender-neutral or gender-inclusive language in public-facing government communications (as opposed to internal HR or employment policies).

All documentation relating to whether the Digital.govt.nz inclusive language guidance (under the heading "Gender-inclusive language") was developed by or in consultation with the Commission, including any records of the development process, drafting history, inter-agency consultation, or approval process.

Any guidance issued by the Commission specifically addressing when sex-based language (e.g. "women," "female") should be retained, as opposed to replaced, in health or medical communications targeting sex-specific conditions or populations.

2. Part 2: Public Service Act 2020 - Application to Public-Facing Communications

2.1 Legal and Policy Advice

Please provide:

Any formal advice, legal opinion, or guidance issued by the Commission on whether section 75 of the Public Service Act 2020 (relating to inclusive workplaces) applies to the content of public-facing communications, as opposed to internal workplace policies.

Any briefing papers or correspondence between the Commission and Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora (or its predecessor, the Ministry of Health) regarding the application of gender-inclusive language standards to public health communications, covering the period 1 January 2020 to 31 January 2024.

3. Part 3: Rainbow Tick and Accreditation Schemes

3.1 Formal Endorsement and Interaction with Communications Content

Please provide:

Any documentation indicating whether the Commission has formally endorsed, recommended, or required Rainbow Tick accreditation (or any equivalent LGBTQ+ accreditation scheme) for public service agencies.

Any guidance issued by the Commission on how Rainbow Tick or similar accreditation standards interact with the content of public-facing government communications.

Any documentation of complaints or reviews received by the Commission relating to the use or removal of sex-based language in government public health materials.

4. Part 4: Decision-Making Accountability

4.1 Consultation on Cervical Screening Communications

Please provide:

Any records indicating whether the Commission was consulted by Health New Zealand or the Ministry of Health on the language used in the 2023/2024 national cervical screening programme communications, specifically including materials HE1191 and HE1192.

Any correspondence between the Commission and Health New Zealand on the use of gender-inclusive language in health promotion materials, for the period 1 January 2022 to 31 January 2024”.

The OIA requires that we advise you of our decision on your request no later than 20 working days after the day that we received your request. Unfortunately, it will not be possible to meet that time limit, and we are, therefore, writing to notify you of an extension of the time to make our decision, to 31 July 2026.

This extension is necessary because your request is for a large quantity of information or necessitates a search through a large quantity of information and meeting the original time limit would unreasonably interfere with our operations and consultations necessary to make a decision on your request are such that a proper response cannot reasonably be made within the original time limit.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request with us, including this decision, please feel free to contact Ministerial and Executive Services team at: Enquiries@publicservice.govt.nz.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Nicky Dirks

Manager – Ministerial and Executive Services
Public Service Commission - Te Kawa Mataaho