

9 July 2026

Nigel Gray
fyi-request-34901-0d436575@requests.fyi.org.nz

REF: OIA-22561

Dear Nigel

Request made under the Official Information Act 1982

Thank you for your email of 16 June 2026 requesting the following information regarding drug-related crashes, for the period from 1 January 2014 to the present, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

2.1 Definitions and classification rules Please provide all NZTA definitions of:

“drug-related crash”

“drug-impaired driver”

“drug involvement”

For each definition, please provide:

the date it was adopted

the reason for adoption

any changes over the last 10 years

the scientific, legal, or policy basis for the definition

NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) does not use the term *drugs-related*. Instead, NZTA staff use the terms *“drugs proven”*, *drugs involved”* and *“drugs suspected*.

The *Drugs proven* Code 109 is applied when:

- a blood test result for drugs is positive and the coder believes that, where there is a positive test for drugs, the positive results is not solely because pharmaceutical drugs have been administered by an emergency responder after the crash, but before the administration of a drug test; or
- an oral fluid confirmatory test is positive.

For *Drugs suspected*, Code 108 is applied against a driver in the following circumstances:

- the driver refused a test for drugs; or
- the New Zealand Police officer attending the crash had good cause to suspect that the driver has been taking drugs; or
- the driver was arrested pursuant to section 120 of the Land Transport Act 1998; or
- there were two positive oral fluid screening tests, and the result of a blood test is not available.

New Zealand Police provides crash data to NZTA. Our Customer Operations Support team then analyses the data for each crash and determines which factors likely caused or contributed to the outcome of a crash. A code is applied to each of these factors, and further information on these is available on our website at <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/Safety/docs/cas-factor-codes.pdf>

The allocation of these codes is often a matter of judgement. The coder must interpret the narrative of the attending New Zealand Police officer along with any other data provided.

A crash may (and often has) more than one contributing factor, but a crash does not have a primary cause attributed to it. When crashes are reported, contributing factors are sometimes grouped into road safety categories and, because a crash can involve multiple factors, it can be counted in more than one category.

2.2 Evidential thresholds

Please provide the evidential thresholds NZTA uses to classify a crash as drug-related, including:

presence of a substance

impairment

contribution

causation

For each threshold, please provide:

how it is determined

who determines it

whether Police evidence is required

whether coronial findings are required

whether toxicology presence alone is sufficient

When coding crashes, NZTA does not use the term *drugs-related* but staff can explain what triggers the coding of *drugs proven*.

Please refer to our response for part 2.1 of your request, and Attachment 11 which was provided for part 3 of our response to your previous request (reference OIA-22302).

2.3 Classification workflow

Police have stated they do not classify crashes and hold no workflow for doing so.

Accordingly, please provide NZTA's workflow for assigning the "drug-related" label, including:

the staff, units, or contractors responsible

the decision-making process

any internal guidance or SOPs

any automated or algorithmic processes

any quality-assurance or review steps

If no workflow exists, please confirm this explicitly.

NZTA does not use a workflow for *drugs-related* but do for *drugs proven* and *drugs involved*.

Please also refer to our response to part 2.1 of your request.

2.4 Source data and authority

Police have stated they:

do not determine impairment

do not determine causation

do not classify crashes

do not define "drug-related crash"

do not audit accuracy

Given this, please provide:

the source data NZTA relies on to assign the "drug-related" label

whether NZTA receives coronial toxicology

whether NZTA receives coronial causation findings

whether NZTA uses Police TCR fields that Police themselves state are not causal determinations

NZTA does not officially use the term *drug-related* when providing coding for crashes. Please refer to our response for part 2.1 regarding *Drugs proven* Code 109 and *Drugs suspected* Code 108.

We can, however, further advise that code 221 *Impaired non-driver (pedestrian / cyclist / passenger, etc)* is used when drugs were present in non-driving parties such as passengers, cyclists or pedestrians who may have contributed to the crash.

In rare cases where drugs may have contributed to the cause or outcome of a crash, but where none of the above-mentioned factors are applicable, Code 220 *Other drugs* may be applied against a person involved in the crash.

As noted in our response for parts 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3, *drug-related* is not a term used by NZTA for contributing factors in a crash.

For fatal crashes, NZTA receives serious crash unit reports and coroner's reports. Coders read these reports and revise the coding of these crashes when considered necessary.

2.5 Reconciliation of the contradiction

Police have stated:

"Police does not hold internal documents reconciling this distinction."

Accordingly, please provide NZTA's reconciliation of the following contradiction:

NZTA publishes statistics claiming specific causal categories (e.g., "drug-related"), while

Police state no single factor can be confidently identified as the primary cause of a crash.

Please provide:

all internal documents, emails, memos, or guidance addressing this contradiction

any risk assessments relating to misclassification

any limitations statements used internally or externally

NZTA's position on this matter is that no single factor can be confidently identified as the primary cause of a crash, which reflects the reality that crashes typically involve multiple contributing factors. These can include driver behaviour, vehicle condition, road environment, and external conditions – all of which often interact in complex ways.

For reporting and analysis purposes, while crash categories are based on identified contributing factors, this does not mean that a single factor is treated as the sole cause. Instead, it indicates that the factor was present and contributed to the crash. This means that a single crash may be included in more than one category where multiple contributing factors are identified.

As a result, there is no inconsistency to reconcile. The statement reflects how crashes occur in practice, while the use of categories is simply a way to analyse and report on contributing factors to support road safety interventions and monitoring of trends in high-risk behaviours. I am therefore refusing your request for *all internal documents, emails, memos, or guidance addressing* this matter under section 18(e) of the Act as the documents alleged to contain the information requested do not exist.

We can, however, advise that there is a reference to *Drug-related deaths and serious injuries* (SAFE7) in our *Statement of Performance Expectations*, which is available on our website. As an example, you should refer to page 29 of the 2025-26 report which can be found at:
www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/statement-of-performance-expectations/2025-2026/spe-2025-2026.pdf

This measure includes both alcohol and drugs as contributing factors. The definition of SAFE7 from our *Statement of Performance Expectations*' 2025-26 explanatory notes states that it counts the number of road deaths and serious injuries where a driver has tested positive for alcohol or drugs with data from the Crash Analysis System (CAS). This information is available on our website at:
www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/statement-of-performance-expectations/2025-2026/spe-2025-2026-performance-measure-explanatory-notes.pdf

NZTA also reports the separate components in page 11 of the quarterly report for the breakdown.

2.6 Accuracy, audits, and validation

Please provide:

any audits, reviews, or assessments of the accuracy of NZTA's "drug-related crash" classifications

any documents discussing limitations, uncertainties, or risks associated with assigning causal labels

any correspondence with Police or the Ministry of Transport regarding classification accuracy

If no audits exist, please confirm this explicitly.

We last undertook a review of codes for contributing factors in crashes at the end of 2015. Since then, no further review of codes has been done. We tried to locate the 2015 review, which included actioning a digital sweep of our internal document storage system but, due to the length of time (nearly 11 years), we were unable to find a copy of it. I am therefore refusing this part of your request under section 18(e) of the Act as the document alleged to contain the information, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

Other documents requested have also been provided as Attachments 1 and 2 for part 5 of our response to OIA-22302 2026.

Under section 28 of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review my decision to refuse part of this request. The contact details for the Ombudsman can be located at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

In line with NZTA policy, this response will soon be published on our website, with personal information removed.

If you would like to discuss this reply with NZTA, please contact Ministerial Services by email to official.correspondence@nzta.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Driscoll". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Josh Driscoll
Manager, Ministerial Services