



2 NOV 2017

Gregory Soar
fyi-request-6631-6624ccec@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Soar

Thank you for your email of 4 October 2017, and further emails of 8 and 9 October 2017, requesting information about the use of pseudonyms by staff in the Remote Client Unit.

The Chief Executive of the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) has stated publicly that the health and safety of his staff is absolutely critical, and that is why we use pseudonyms for staff in the Remote Client Unit.

The Remote Client Unit (RCU) was established on 1 July 2004 and exists to provide Work and Income services to clients who, due to unacceptable behaviour or exceptional reasons can no longer access services through their local Work and Income service centre. Clients are referred to the unit in two ways:

- Trespassed clients who are referred to the unit by the region and meet set criteria.
- Clients who are not trespassed from their local offices but the National Commissioner determines that a client can best be dealt with by the RCU due to exceptional or unique circumstances.

The RCU works with each client in a way that helps them to make positive steps and changes that may see them being able to return to accessing Work and Income services and assistance through normal channels or to assist clients into employment/training.

Due to the risk profile of the client group that the RCU staff are required to manage, the Ministry has determined that the use of pseudonyms is necessary and appropriate to protect staff from being identified and potentially placed at greater risk of harassment, threats or even violence, both within and outside of their work environment.

You state that the Crimes Act 1961 makes it clear that fake names make the document a "false document" and have asked for the legal avenues / legislation that specifically permits Work and Income or the Ministry to use "false documents" in any dealings with clients.

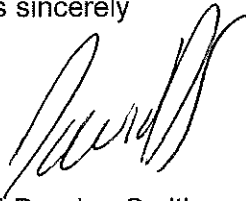
The Ministry takes the safety of its staff very seriously and believes that the withholding of officials names and the use of pseudonyms meets the threshold of section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982 to protect the safety and privacy of the staff members.

I have enclosed one document titled 'Remote Client Unit Business Process', dated 16 March 2015. This document provides an overview of the Remote Client Unit and outlines the processes in which the Ministry uses pseudonyms for staff.

You will note that some information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982 to protect the privacy of the individuals who appear in the document. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding the use of pseudonyms, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by telephone: 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Dundon-Smith', written in a cursive style.

David Dundon-Smith
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services