

29 July 2019

19-D-01281

s 9(2)(a)

Radio New Zealand

s 9(2)(a)@rnz.co.nz

Dear s 9(2)

Thank you for your email of 24 June 2019 requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

*Can the MFE pls provide to us a copy of its prioritisation tool, the same one that FENZ has been using to conduct a preliminary assessment of the possible risk to human health posed by PFAS release at its fire stations*

We subsequently clarified with you that you were seeking the list of all properties assessed using the prioritisation tool, as opposed to just the tool (we have already provided you the link to the Prioritisation Tool User Manual).

The information that regional councils provided to the Ministry for the compilation of the tool was based largely on historical land uses, and not on actual historical use of PFAS, nor on any known PFAS contamination.

The Ministry deals with a range of subject matter and relies extensively on the flow of information from councils. Councils in turn receive their information from a variety of sources, including the public. Releasing information that was provided for a specific purpose will threaten the flow of information which the Ministry and councils rely on to perform their functions.

Therefore, the details about individual sites that were assessed using the prioritisation tool are being withheld under section 9(2)(ba)(i), as releasing the information:

*would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information, or information from the same source, and it is in the public interest that such information should continue to be supplied.*

Although the Ministry is currently focusing on known PFAS contaminated sites like Woodbourne and Ohakea air force bases, the other sites on the priority tool list are still being considered. This means that any release of information about sites on that list may prevent free and frank discussions of future actions that may be required to address those sites. Therefore, section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act also applies, and the information is being withheld in order to:

*maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any department or organisation in the course of their duty.*

In terms of section 9(1) of the Act, I am satisfied that, in the circumstances, the withholding of this information is not outweighed by other considerations that render it desirable to make the information available in the public interest.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Office of the Ombudsman of my decision to withhold information relating to this request, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. The relevant details can be found on their website at: [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz).

Please note that due to the public interest in our work the Ministry for the Environment publishes responses to requests for official information on our website (on our OIA responses page) shortly after the response has been sent.

If you have any queries about this, please feel free to contact our Executive Relations team by email at [Ministerials@mfe.govt.nz](mailto:Ministerials@mfe.govt.nz).

Yours sincerely



**Glenn Wigley**  
Director, Natural and Built System

Released under the provisions of  
the Official Information Act 1982