



13 May 2024

OIAD-1000

9(2)a

Tēnā koe 9(2)a ,

Thank you for your email of 8 March 2024 to the Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry) requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

Any information MFE holds regarding Australia's 2023 recycling ban. Please exclude general email correspondence.

On 13 March 2024, the Ministry sought clarification on your request. Specifically, the Ministry sought further details about the specific aspect of Australia's or New Zealand's recycling policies that your request related to. You clarified that your request was for information on the 2019 Australian ban on exporting plastic waste, including the ban being lifted in 2023.

On 8 April 2024, the Ministry notified you that we had extended the timeframe for our response to your request under section 15A(1)(b) of the Act, as consultations necessary to make a decision on the request were such that a proper response could not reasonably be made within the original timeframe.

The Ministry has identified two documents in scope of your request. I am releasing 'BRF-3395/RPT 23/125 - Waste legislation: policy decisions for managing waste imports and exports' and 'BRF-3444 - Aide memoire: Information on plastic waste exports out of New Zealand' to you in full. The Ministry has consulted with Australia's Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water on the release of both documents in scope of this request. Both documents contain statements that I wish to provide further comment and clarification on in this letter.

Page 22 of BRF-3395 states that "if infrastructure on shore is not sufficient and export barriers too high due to regulations, landfilling will increase, as seen in Australia after the introduction of comparable legislation". The available data does not show that the waste export ban has had a major impact on landfill rates in Australia. Factors influencing landfill disposal rates are broader and more complex than the waste export program and includes continuing increases to Australia's population and the amount of waste generated, increases in waste materials that are not regulated under the waste export ban, and differences in outcomes of the regulated plastic polymers.

Page 10 of BRF-3444 states that "this ban, along with high volumes of recyclables collected through container return schemes has resulted in Australia facing domestic recycling capacity issues and stockpiling of waste plastics. To mitigate this, a one-year exemption was granted in early 2023 to allow the export of clean and sorted PET #1". I would like to clarify that Australia's domestic recycling capacity issues are not solely attributed to the waste export ban. There are many interconnected reasons for domestic recycling capacity issues, including but not limited to international waste policy changes, popular consumer plastic service interruptions and extensive construction supply chain delays.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Office of the Ombudsman of my decisions 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.

Please note that, due to the public interest in our work, the Ministry publishes responses to requests for official information 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 Ministerial Services team: ministerials@mfe.govt.nz.

Nāku noa, nā,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Wigley'.

Glenn Wigley

General Manager – Waste & HSNO Policy
Ministry for the Environment | Manatū Mō Te Taiao