



20 June 2024

OIAD-1122

9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe 9(2)(a),

Thank you for your email of 10 June 2024 to the Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry) requesting information about funding allocation for the Pukekohe Action Plan under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). You have specifically requested the following:

- 1. Please regard this letter as an official complaint and request under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) for all communication that led to the above decisions, who made those decisions within the MfE leadership group (or MPI if included) and a copy of the briefing paper to the respective Minister/s regarding those decisions.*
- 2. Under section 23, OIA, we also request the reasoning for making those decisions and recommendations to the Minister specifically in regard to the change of budget from \$10 million initially approved and ring fenced under the previous Government down to \$6.4 million, unilaterally adding an additional highly prejudicial criterion (as relayed above), and unilaterally determining the final list of priority projects without consulting the collective.*

In Part 2 of your request, you have asked for the reasoning for decisions and recommendations made to Associate Environment Minister, Hon Andrew Hoggard, regarding the change in allocation from \$10 million to \$6.4 million, the addition of a criterion, and a lack of consultation with the collective.

The Pukekohe Action Plan, along with other Jobs for Nature projects, was subject to significant cost savings exercises. The Freshwater Programmes savings initiative returned funding for freshwater programmes to align with the Government's priorities. These included the Jobs for Nature Secretariat, freshwater investment and implementation of freshwater policy and initiatives under the Essential Freshwater Fund (EFF). EFF savings returned funds that were yet to be contracted or fully distributed.

The decision to allocate \$6.4 million to the Pukekohe Action Plan was made under urgency in January 2024 as a result of the cost savings requested by the Government. The requirement to make these decisions under urgency meant the Ministry was unable to consult with the collective. The Ministry's priority in making this allocation decision was to protect a viable package of projects and optimise the outcomes of a reduced funding quantum. In making this decision, the Ministry distinguished between urgent priority projects and priority projects that:

- could start later without significant impact on overall plan implementation, or
- were less technically robust, or
- had potential for a commercial business case or opportunities to seek alternative funding.

The Ministry requires clarification on Part 1 of your request in order for us to respond. Can you please advise:

- whether the communication you seek relates solely to decisions made about funding allocated to the Pukekohe Action Plan, or all Jobs for Nature Projects; and
- if you are seeking communications between the Ministry and the office of Minister Hoggard only, or if your request also includes internal Ministry communications.

The Ministry's briefing to Minister Hoggard on the Pukekohe Action Plan's funding allocation will soon be publicly available on the Ministry's website. I must therefore refuse this part of your request under section 18(d) of the Act as the information will soon be publicly available.

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](http://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](mailto:ministerials@mfe.govt.nz).

Nāku noa, nā,



**Lorena Stephen**  
General Manager – Communications and Engagement  
Ministry for the Environment | Manatū Mō Te Taiao