



OIAD-1137

9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe 9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 26 June 2024 requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

I have a few questions about recycling of PET 1 plastic. Could you please assist? My questions are: For all Pet 1 plastic which is put into the correct recycling container/bin:

- 1. What proportion of it is recycled?*
- 2. What proportion of it is recycled in NZ, and what proportion goes offshore?*
- 3. If any goes offshore, where does it go?*
- 4. When drink bottles are made of recycled plastic, do they need to have an internal lining of virgin plastic to make them safe to drink from?*
- 5. If so, is there a rule requiring that? Where is that set out?*

As you are aware, the Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry) transferred parts four and five of your request to the Ministry for Primary Industries for response. You subsequently requested the following additional information:

Question 6: For PET 1 which goes offshore:

- a) What proportion of this ends up being recycled?*
- b) What happens to the portion that isn't recycled?*
- c) How much certainty do we have about these estimates?*
- d) How does NZ inform itself about what happens to this plastic?*
- e) What does NZ know about the way it is sorted or processed? Here, I am wondering whether NZ chooses places where we somehow know there are good procedures in place, or whether we can't control it and it potentially ends up being sorted by children in unsafe conditions.*
- f) Does NZ have plans underway to make any changes to how PET 1 is recycled or where it is sent?*

We have provided a response to your questions below:

Part 1: *What proportion of it is recycled?*

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Part 2: *What proportion of it is recycled in NZ, and what proportion goes offshore?*

Response:

The Ministry does not hold this official information, and therefore these parts of the request must be refused under section 18(e) of the Act. However, you may wish to view relevant information in the Ministry's report '*Waste and Resource Recovery Infrastructure and Services Stocktake*'. You can access the relevant information, including a breakdown of onshore reprocessing by plastic type, on pages 22-28 of the report, at: [Waste-and-resource-recovery-infrastructure-and-services-stocktake.pdf \(environment.govt.nz\)](https://environment.govt.nz/assets/Infrastructure-and-services-stocktake.pdf).

Part 3: *If any goes offshore, where does it go?*

Response:

The Ministry does not hold this official information, and therefore this part of the request must be refused under section 18(e) of the Act. However, we do have some information on combined totals for plastic exports for PET #1, PP #5 and other polymers. You may wish to view this information in a proactively released briefing on the Ministry's website at: [https://environment.govt.nz/assets/OIA/Files/Doc3-BRF-3444 Aide Memoire-Information on plastic waste exports out of New Zealand-for release.pdf](https://environment.govt.nz/assets/OIA/Files/Doc3-BRF-3444_Aide_Memoire-Information_on_plastic_waste_exports_out_of_New_Zealand-for_release.pdf). In addition, the Statistics New Zealand Infoshare tool contains more recent information on plastic exports, and can be accessed at: [Browse - Infoshare - Statistics New Zealand \(stats.govt.nz\)](https://stats.govt.nz/browse/infoshare).

Part 6: *Question 6: For PET 1 which goes offshore:*

- a) What proportion of this ends up being recycled?*
- b) What happens to the portion that isn't recycled?*
- c) How much certainty do we have about these estimates?*
- d) How does NZ inform itself about what happens to this plastic?*
- e) What does NZ know about the way it is sorted or processed? Here, I am wondering whether NZ chooses places where we somehow know there are good procedures in place, or whether we can't control it and it potentially ends up being sorted by children in unsafe conditions.*
- f) Does NZ have plans underway to make any changes to how PET 1 is recycled or where it is sent?*

Response:

In response to questions a), b), c), and e) of part 6, the Ministry does not hold this official information, and therefore these parts of the request must be refused under section 18(e) of the Act. However, you may wish to view anecdotal information on the process after recycling leaves New Zealand, which can be accessed on pages 23-27 of this published briefing on the Ministry's website at: https://environment.govt.nz/assets/OIA/Files/Doc3-BRF-3444_Aide_Memoire-Information_on_plastic_waste_exports_out_of_New_Zealand-for_release.pdf.

In response to question d), as the Ministry does not hold this official information and information regarding plastic exports is held by companies who export plastic, this part of the request must also be refused under section 18(e) of the Act.

In response to question f), updates to the Waste Minimisation Fund (WMF) are underway to help address plastic waste. While the WMF is currently closed to undergo changes, including what the waste levy can be spent on, problematic, and hard to recycle plastics will be an investment priority for the Government. The Government plans to invest in waste minimisation infrastructure that reduces plastic packaging (primarily types 1, 2, and 5) from landfill. While details are being finalised, the Government plans to fund projects that will reduce the plastic we use, and make what we do use, reusable or recyclable.

Projects through the WMF and the Plastics Innovation Fund (PIF) that are currently underway include:

- The PIF has a current investment of \$375,000 in a project which aims to replace laminated single use food trays with a recyclable mono PET tray. Single use laminated PET food trays has an estimated yearly market of 100 million trays and this project will target approximately 10% of that market to become fully recyclable in its second year of production. This project will help keep valuable PET out of landfills and additionally apply market pressure to other stakeholders to follow suit.
- \$994,900 through the WMF to industry organisation The Packaging Forum to design a regulated plastic packaging product stewardship scheme over two years. The project will see representatives from across the plastic packaging chain come together to design a fit-for-purpose product stewardship scheme. The Packaging Forum and the NZ Food and Grocery Council will also contribute funding to the project, which will cost a total of \$1,361,000.

You may also be aware that the Minister for the Environment intends to reform the Waste Minimisation Act 2008 and Litter Act 1979 to ensure New Zealand has fit-for-purpose, modern waste legislation that gives us more options and flexibility to reduce and manage waste. Officials at the Ministry are developing policies for the reform, to discuss with the Minister. It is intended that there will be an opportunity for public consultation on the proposals at the start of 2025.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Office of the Ombudsman of my decision 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 blue ink, appearing to read 'Shaun Lewis', with a stylized, cursive script.

Shaun Lewis
General Manager – Waste Systems
Ministry for the Environment | Manatū Mō Te Taiao