



21 February 2024

OIAD-933

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Tēnā koe 9(2)a

Thank you for your email of 25 January 2024 requesting the following information from the Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry) under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

1. *Copies of all internal correspondence including but not limited to emails, letters, emails, text messages, Whatsapp, Signal, Microsoft Teams sent or received by any Ministry for the Environment staff or representatives regarding a request of savings from the Minister of Finance for the 2024/25 financial year, since 20 November 2023.*
2. *Copies of all external correspondence including but not limited to emails, letters, emails, text messages, Whatsapp, Signal, Microsoft Teams sent or received between Ministry for the Environment staff or representatives and the Minister of Finance or her office requesting savings for the 2024/25 financial year, since 20 November 2023.*
3. *Copies of all correspondence including but not limited to emails, letters, emails, text messages, Whatsapp, Signal, Microsoft Teams sent or received by any Ministry for the Environment staff or representatives regarding a request of savings from the Minister of Finance for the 2024/25 financial year, since 20 November 2023.*
4. *Copies of all advice, briefings, memos or any other documents provided by Ministry for the Environment staff or representatives regarding a request of savings from the Minister of Finance for the 2024/25 financial year, since 20 November 2023.*
5. *Any further reports the Minister or her Office have received from Ministry for the Environment staff or representatives regarding a request of savings from the Minister of Finance for the 2024/25 financial year, since 20 November 2023.*

As the Minister of Finance, Hon Nicola Willis, announced as part of the mini-Budget in December 2023, the Government seeking \$1.5 billion per annum in savings to deliver on policy commitments and fund critical cost pressures. Minister Willis has asked agencies to identify savings options of either 6.5 percent or 7.5 percent, depending on how much their full-time staff numbers increased since 2017. Agencies are currently working to identify credible savings proposals.

These proposals, including a description of the associated rationale, risks and trade-offs tied to each option, will be provided to the Treasury and Minister Willis as part of Budget 2024 submissions. Ministers and Cabinet will then make final decisions on whether to accept these proposals as part of the Budget 2024 process. Information related to savings is still actively being considered by Ministers and will continue to be throughout the Budget process. No final decisions on savings proposals have been made at this stage.

Consistent with past practice and recognizing the strong public interest in Budget decisions, we have been advised that the Treasury will be undertaking a Budget proactive release, with information scheduled to be released in the weeks following Budget Day.

On 12 February 2024, you refined parts 1 to 3 of your request to be for correspondence *“...sent or received by any Ministry for the Environment leadership team member regarding a request of savings from the Minister of Finance...”*.

The Ministry has undertaken an IT search of the inboxes of our tier 1 & 2 executive leadership team, Te Purengi, and have identified over 300 emails potentially in scope of your request. We have also undertaken a search of the inboxes of tier 1, 2 and 3 managers and identified over 2700 emails potentially in scope of your request.

We consider that to identify whether any of these emails are in scope of your request would impact the Ministry's ability to continue with our day-to-day functions, and as such, are refusing parts 1 to 3 of your request under section 18(f) of the Act, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation and research required. As required by section 15A, we have considered whether any of the mechanisms provided within the Act would enable your request to be granted, and do not consider fixing a charge or extending the time limit would enable us to respond.

We have identified five documents in scope of parts 4 and 5 of your request. As these documents relate to initiatives that will be presented to Ministers and Cabinet as part of the Budget 2024 process, I am withholding these documents, including their titles, in full under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Act to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials.

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.

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.

Yours sincerely



Arun Patel

General Manager, Finance & Procurement
Ministry for the Environment | Manatū Mō Te Taiao