

SUPPORTING OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS AGENCY WEBSITE GUIDANCE



PRINCIPLES, DESIGN, RESOURCES

Explaining the Official Information Act to requesters can be difficult. To improve the experience for New Zealanders who want to ask for agency information, the State Services Commission is providing optional webpage content for agencies to use or adapt for use on their websites.

The content begins on the second page of this guidance.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Alongside the optional webpage content over the following pages explaining the OIA to requesters, we recommend two principles.

An agency's OIA webpage is:

- available directly from an agency's homepage
- separate to the agency's 'Contact us' page.

DESIGN AND STRUCTURE

The guidance is provided in a webpage format with links to contextual information provided on the State Services Commission website. These pages provide tips for users requesting information and guidance on how agencies will respond.

USEFUL LINKS

The below links may be of use for your agency with how you process your official information act requests.

State Services Commission

The State Services Commission provides webpages for agencies to link to, explaining the OIA. These webpages provide [tips for requesters](#) (for example, being specific in their requests) and explain [how agencies will respond to OIA requests](#) (for example, it explains when information will be withheld and the legal timeframes).

Agencies are encouraged to link to these webpages, to further explain the OIA to requesters.

Ministry of Justice

The Ministry of Justice provide:

- an example of clear and easy to understand explanations about [requesting official information](#),
- the [Directory of Official Information](#), and
- the [Charging Guidelines for Official Information Act 1982 Requests](#).

New Zealand Police

The New Zealand Police provide an online [request for official information](#) form, allowing requests to be made online for non-personal or third party information.

WEB CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

The content over the next two pages is available for agencies to use to explain the Official Information Act to requesters.

The content can be used, as a whole or in part, and can be adapted to fit agency practice or processes.

REQUESTING INFORMATION

People in New Zealand can request government information (official information) and can expect it to be made available unless there is a good reason to withhold it.

The Official Information Act 1982 (or OIA) enables citizens, permanent residents, visitors to New Zealand, and body corporates registered or with a place of business in New Zealand, to make a request for official information held by government agencies, including [INSERT AGENCY NAME].

MAKING A REQUEST

Your request should be as clear and specific as you can possibly make it. Before making a request please check our other sources of information listed below.

You can contact us in a number of ways to request information:	We would like:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online form: [IF AVAILABLE SUPPLY LINK] • Email: [EMAIL] • Telephone: [TELEPHONE] • Postal address: [POSTAL ADDRESS] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. your name 2. contact address (email or postal) 3. details of the information you want. <p>We may ask you for more details.</p>

If you make your request by phone or in person, we will either confirm it in writing ourselves or, if we're not sure what you're seeking, we may ask if you'd mind putting it in writing.

The State Services Commission provide advice on [tips for requesting information](#) and [guidance on how agencies will respond](#).

BEFORE MAKING A REQUEST

Before making a request please check our other sources of information. You may find the information you require is already available:

- [LIST AND LINK MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION]

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

We will acknowledge your request and are required by law to give you our decision on your request as soon as possible, and no later than 20 working days after we receive your request.

If we need more time to make our decision on your request, for example if you are requesting a lot of information, we will let you know and give you an idea of how long it will take. You can complain to the [Office of the Ombudsman](#) if you're not happy with our decision to extend the time.

Here is further guidance on [how we will respond to your request](#).

You can see data on the number of requests we receive each year and the timeliness of our responses on the [Official Information Act Statistics](#) part of the State Services Commission's website.

WHAT DOES IT COST?

Requesting official information is free, though we can charge a reasonable amount if it will take a lot of work to supply the information requested. There's no charge for the first hour spent on your request or for the first 20 pages of photocopying.

Find out more in our [guidance on how we will respond](#).

If you are unhappy with our decision to charge, you can complain to the [Office of the Ombudsman](#).

WHAT IF I'M NOT SATISFIED?

You may wish to contact us in the first instance to see if we can resolve the issue.

You can make a complaint to the [Office of the Ombudsman](#) if you:

- have concerns regarding the decision we made on your request
- were unhappy about the way your request was treated or processed.

These concerns can relate to the withholding of information, extending the timeframe to respond to you, any charges for providing the information you have requested, delays in providing you with a decision or the information, or your request being transferred.

The [Office of the Ombudsman](#) can investigate and review our decision and may make a recommendation to us if it is considered appropriate.