

20 April 2020

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Beau Murrah
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Dear Beau Murrah

I refer to your email of 20 February 2020 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

"I request documents relating to Facebook and specifically algorithms from March 1 2019 onwards.

Including but not limited to:

- 1. Facebook and the Christchurch Call agreement in relation to algorithms*
- 2. The March 15 2019 terror attacks and algorithms and Facebook*
- 3. Efforts taken to enhance algorithmic transparency (per 68. from 27 September 2019: Cabinet paper: Countering Violent Extremist Content Online)."*

On 28 February 2020, you advised us:

"...I am available to clarify anything that is unclear about the scope of the request. I made a similar OIA request to Officer of the Privacy Commissioner and spoke with a policy advisor there and helped clarify my request over the phone and it was a useful exercise.

I have made this request to MFAT principally because it is/was the host of the 'negotiating team' around the Christchurch Call and likely to hold documents or correspondence outlined in my initial request.

The purpose of this OIA is to help inform a select committee submission on upcoming legislation. Anything I can do to clarify to help keep the request in the timeframe I would happily do."

On 19 March 2020, we advised you that, due to the necessity for further review and consultation, we needed to extend the time limit for responding to you to 20 April 2020. We also advised you that many Ministry staff are currently working on issues relating to the impact of COVID-19, which is putting pressure on business as usual work, however we are doing our best to process all of our requests as quickly as possible.

The purpose of this letter is to notify you that we have made a decision on your request. We will provide you with the information you have requested in a narrative response that answers each part of your request once we have notified relevant parties.

We are in the final stages of review and consultation on your request, and I assure you we are making best efforts to get the response letter to you as soon as possible.

In the interest of being open and transparent, I advise you that Ministry staff are now almost all working remotely, and still deeply involved with issues relating to COVID-19 given the numbers of New Zealanders seeking assistance to return home, which is continuing to put pressure on business as usual work. We are still, however, working to process all of our requests where possible, including yours.

Things are taking longer as we reengineer to use electronic approvals from key decision makers at a time where COVID-19 work, and its implications worldwide and for New Zealand, remains a high priority (including a 24 hour emergency contact centre).

I also note that on 24 March 2020, the Office of the Ombudsman released a statement relating to official information response times during the COVID-19 emergency. The full press release can be found online at: <https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/news/chief-ombudsmans-statement-official-information-response-times-during-covid-19-emergency>.

You have the right under section 28(3) of the OIA to seek a review of this response by the Ombudsman.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'W' followed by a long horizontal line that tapers to the right.

Wendy Adams
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade