

12 JUN 2020

Simon Thornley  
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Dear Mr Thornley

**Official Information Act 1982 request**

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) request of 15 May 2020 to the New Zealand Police. On 20 May 2020, your request was transferred to the Ministry of Justice (the Ministry) for response. Specifically, you requested the following:

*[T]he weekly count of completed suicides for the last three years. I'm particularly interested in counts over the last two months, during the lockdown period.*

It is important to note that the Ministry does not hold information regarding provisional suicide deaths. This information is held by the Coroner's Court, which is not subject to the OIA under section 2(6)(a) of that Act. Accordingly, I must refuse your request under section 18(g)(i) of the OIA as the Ministry does not hold the information you request and there are no grounds for believing that the information is held by another department, Minister of the Crown, organisation or local authority. However, I can provide some general information that may be helpful to you.

Each year, the Chief Coroner releases a count of suicide figures by way of the Annual Provisional Suicide Statistics. You can access this information for the last three financial years at [coronialservices.justice.govt.nz/suicide/annual-suicide-statistics-since-2011/](http://coronialservices.justice.govt.nz/suicide/annual-suicide-statistics-since-2011/). The 2019/20 figures will be released in the coming months.

Regarding the lockdown period, I can further advise the Chief Coroner issued the following statement to media regarding provisional suicides during, and immediately prior to, COVID-19 Alert Level 4:

*"I am working closely with Carla na Nagara and her team in the Suicide Prevention Office to monitor suspected suicide numbers.*

*"Any suspected suicide that has been reported to the coroner during Alert Level 4, and the alert levels that follow, is currently being investigated by the coroner and therefore is yet to have intent established. There are always a number of contributing factors involved when people die by suicide and these are highly personal to each individual.*

*"It would be irresponsible to release provisional numbers for such a short period of time, or to associate these figures with the pandemic, as the numbers can rise and fall for many reasons. The release of annual provisional figures allows for more accurate comparison.*

*"However, there have been concerning reports of a reported rise in suicide rates during Alert Level 4. In the interests of addressing this, I can confirm based on the provisional numbers I have, this is incorrect. The provisional trend suggests the suicide rate was lower during the Alert Level 4 period than the 33 days prior to it (22 February – 25 March 2020). The suicide rate during Alert Level 4 was also lower than the rate for the same period from 2008 to 2020.*

*"I have no further comment to make on this outside of the provisional annual release."*

If you are not satisfied with my response, you have the right to complain to the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the OIA. You can contact the Office of the Ombudsman by writing to PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143; calling 0800 802 602; or emailing [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz)

I trust this information assists.

Yours sincerely



**Bruce Findlay**  
**Group Manager (Acting), Courts and Tribunals, Regional Service Delivery**

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