

24 April 2014

Mr James Littlejohn
fyi-request-1567-0df23a9a@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Littlejohn

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 25 March 2014, requesting information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). I understand that you are seeking information relating to the purchase of vehicles for ACC claimants through the Transport for Independence entitlement, and vehicles purchased by the Corporation to meet operational needs. My response will deal with each of the topics you have, in turn. However, before I answer your specific questions, it might help your understanding of ACC's response, if I briefly explain a bit more about ACC's Transport for Independence process.

Background information relating to Transport for Independence entitlements

Clients who apply for transport assistance are required to participate in the Transport for Independence assessment process before ACC can decide whether it is appropriate to contribute to the purchase of a vehicle, or vehicle modifications for a client.

ACC can only consider contributing towards the costs of vehicle modifications, or the purchase of a motor vehicle, once all other transport options have been exhausted. Those other transport options include looking at whether a client has access to scheduled public transport, including mobility taxis, or could travel as a passenger in a private vehicle, or other methods of escorted transport. ACC can only contribute to costs towards the modification or purchase of a motor vehicle where the client has been assessed with long-term serious injuries that are unlikely to improve.

Once ACC receives a recommendation that the best way to meet a client's injury related transport needs is to purchase a new vehicle, then an assessor provides ACC with a shortlist of vehicles that would meet the client's needs. At this point ACC provides the client with a grant to purchase the vehicle of their choice. The Corporation does not directly purchase vehicles for clients.

It is expected that clients will also contribute towards the purchase cost, to the extent of the value of any vehicle they own at the time of their injury. For example, they may already own a motor vehicle which can be traded in for the replacement. It is also important to note that once a vehicle has been purchased, or modified, the client becomes responsible for all of the ongoing running and maintenance costs, including insurance, servicing and maintenance. There is no obligation on ACC's part to replace the vehicle unless the person's covered injury

has deteriorated to the extent that the vehicle initially purchased no longer meets their injury related transport needs.

Data pertaining to vehicles funded through ACC’s Transport for Independence entitlement

The information provided below relates specifically to your queries about ACC’s Transport for Independence process.

What is the number of vehicles currently being used by claimants

ACC is unable to determine how many vehicles are currently being used by claimants where it has contributed to the purchase or modification of such vehicles. This is because ACC cannot identify how many of those vehicles have since been sold by clients. However, ACC has been able to identify that in the period between, 1 July 2013 to 7 April 2014 (current financial year to that date), it has provided grants for 186 claims for the purchase of a vehicle.

What is the average age of vehicles purchased with a grant during the current financial year

As per ACC’s answer above, it is unable to provide the average in relation to the 186 claims identified. This is because locating this information would amount to substantial collation and research under the Act. In order to provide the information you have requested, ACC would have to manually search through each of the 186 claim files identified, in order to determine the age of the vehicles purchased. Each claim file may consist of many hundreds of contacts, including emails, documents and medical information, which would have to be manually searched to find the relevant information. This decision complies with section 18(f) of the Act.

How many vehicles has ACC contributed to the purchase of in the last financial year

In the last financial year, from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013, ACC provided grants for the purchase of a vehicle on 213 claims.

What is the average purchase cost of the those vehicles

The following table shows the number of claims ACC has provided a grant for the purchase of a vehicle to meet a client’s injury related transport needs. ACC has identified that there is significant variance in the costs it contributes towards the purchase of a vehicle for a client. Therefore, it has provided the information in bands, rather than as an average.

Table 1: Claims paid for purchase of a vehicle by total spend and financial year

Total amount contributed by ACC to purchase cost, per claim	Number of claims paid a vehicle purchase grant in 2013 financial year
Less than \$10,000	27
\$10,000 - \$19,999	83
\$20,000 - \$29,999	36

\$30,000 - \$39,999	23
\$40,000 - \$49,999	7
\$50,000 +	37

What is the average cost of any adaptive modifications made to vehicles for claimants

ACC has contributed to the costs of vehicle modifications for 319 claims during the 2013 financial year. The table below provides an indication of how much ACC has contributed to the cost of vehicle modifications for each of those claims.

Table 2: Claims paid for vehicle modifications by total spend and financial year

Total amount contributed by ACC to modification cost, per claim	Number of claims which received contributions for vehicle modifications in 2013 financial year
Less than \$2,500	155
\$2,500 - \$4,999	56
\$5,000 - \$7,499	19
\$7,500 - \$9,999	14
\$10,000 +	75

What is the average length of time between when a claimant is assessed as being eligible for assistance to purchase a vehicle, and when a claimant receives the vehicle

ACC is unable to provide the information you have requested as it does not exist. While ACC contributes to the purchase cost of vehicles for clients, it does not hold information on when a client receives the vehicle, as the final choice of vehicle rests with the client. This decision is in accordance with section 18(e) of the Act.

Any guidelines or other selection criteria for those vehicles, such as minimum safety rating or fuel economy

In answer to this question, please find enclosed a copy of ACC's Transport for Independence policies and procedures. These must be followed by all staff when considering applications from clients for transport assistance, and include guidelines for the purchase of vehicles. Some information has been redacted from these documents to protect privacy. ACC has also determined in this case, that individual privacy is not outweighed by public interest factors. This decision complies with section 9(2)(a) of the Act.

It should be noted that the NCAP safety rating is only available in relation to many more commonly available vehicles. Due to the highly specialised needs of many ACC clients, there are times when the most appropriate vehicle to meet the client's injury related transport needs is not a commonly available vehicle. While such vehicles may not have an NCAP rating, they are expected to meet the safety requirements prescribed by the New Zealand Transport Agency. Additionally, a pre purchase vehicle inspection must be completed on

every vehicle a client is considering purchasing, before the client proceeds with the purchase.

How many decisions relating to vehicle purchases under Transport for Independence were disputed in the last financial year

ACC has identified that between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2013, there were 29 reviews lodged relating to rehabilitation motor vehicles. This total includes reviews lodged relating to vehicle grants and vehicle modifications.

Vehicles purchased by the Corporation to meet operational needs

The information provided in response to the questions below relates specifically to vehicles that have been purchased by ACC, for staff use, to fulfil its operational needs.

What is the number of private vehicles that are being used by claimants have been funded or partially funded by ACC

In your email of 25 March 2014, you have asked for “*The number of private vehicles that are being used by claimants have been funded or partially funded by ACC*”. Given that this question arises in the context of your other questions pertaining to vehicles purchased by ACC for operational needs, we have interpreted it as stated below. However, if our interpretation is incorrect, please feel free to contact me to discuss the data you require.

What is the number of private vehicles used by staff which ACC has contributed to the cost of?

ACC does not contribute to the purchase, or towards any maintenance costs of, staff members' private vehicles. It is the Corporation's policy to discourage staff from using their own private vehicles to conduct their work duties. When a staff member needs to use a vehicle to perform their role, they are encouraged to use a vehicle from ACC's fleet. However, in the event that a fleet vehicle is unavailable and a staff member uses their own private vehicle, ACC will reimburse staff a set rate for costs associated with mileage.

What is the average age of ACC fleet vehicles

As of 31 March 2014, ACC owns 240 fleet vehicles. Please note however, that this number is inflated due to the fact that ACC is part way through a replacement cycle and there are currently a number of vehicles yet to be retired. The average age of vehicles in ACC's fleet is 2.5 years.

What are the average annual operational and capital expenses associated with those vehicles

During the period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013, the total operational cost of ACC's fleet vehicles was \$728,000 and the total capital expenditure cost was \$1,340,000. For the year to date, from 1 July 2013 to 31 March 2014, the total operational cost for fleet vehicles is \$518,000, and the total capital expenditure is \$983,000.

What are the guidelines or other selection criteria for those vehicles, such as minimum safety rating, fuel economy etc.

In answer to your question, please find enclosed a copy of section 11 of ACC's Motor Vehicle Policy, which relates to the selection and purchase of vehicles used by the Corporation.

Please contact me at Stephanie.Lewis@acc.co.nz if you have any queries about this letter.

If you're unhappy with ACC's response, you may make a complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman. You can call them on 0800 802 602 between 9am and 5pm on weekdays, or write to:

The Office of the Ombudsman
PO Box 10 152
WELLINGTON 6143

Yours sincerely



Stephanie Lewis
Advisor, Government Services

*Encl; Section 11 of ACC's Motor Vehicle Policy (Purchase of Motor Vehicles)
ACC's Transport for Independence policies & procedures (Vehicle grant requests & Subsequent vehicle grant decisions)*