

# Office of the Prime Minister

## Prime Minister

Minister for National Security and Intelligence  
Minister for Child Poverty Reduction  
Minister Responsible for Ministerial Services  
Associate Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage



Matthew Hooton

By email: [fyi-request-15866-25e202df@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-15866-25e202df@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Ref: PMO 2021-132

Dear Matthew Hooton

### **Official Information Act request relating to the human rights and environmental impacts of EV batteries**

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request, received on 23 June 2021. You requested:

*"I request all written advice you have received as Prime Minister since 1 January 2021 on:*

- 1) human rights, labour standards and environmental issues associated with the mining of cobalt, lithium, nickel and other rare earth metals required for the batteries of electric vehicles.*
- 2) how batteries required for electric vehicles will be recycled or disposed of in New Zealand over the next 30 years, and in what volumes, and how any disposal sites will be kept safe."*

In response to your first question, I have decided to refuse your request under 18(e) of the Act as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

While the Prime Minister has not received advice dedicated to the issues associated with mining of metals required for batteries of electric vehicles, in March 2021, the Government released New Zealand's Plan of Action against Forced Labour, People Trafficking and Slavery which includes consideration of the elimination of modern slavery from supply chains. The release is available at: <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/action-plan-tackle-modern-forms-slavery-released>.

In response to your second question, the information you have requested is more closely connected to the functions of the Minister for the Environment, Hon David Parker. Normally, I would transfer your request under section 14(b)(ii), however, I understand you have already made the same request to Minister Parker. Therefore, such a transfer is not necessary at this time. I trust the Minister will respond in due course.

In 2020, the Government announced that e-waste, including EV batteries, will be one of six products to be declared "priority products" for regulated product stewardship under the Waste Minimisation Act 2008. Regulated product stewardship helps put the responsibility for a product's life-cycle and waste management on manufacturers, importers, retailers and users, rather than on communities, councils, neighbourhoods and nature.

Declaring a priority product means a product stewardship scheme must be developed and accredited for the product as soon as practicable, and a regulation can be made requiring producer/seller participation in the accredited priority scheme.

The Government will work with stakeholders to co-design options for regulated product stewardship schemes. In 2020 the Government approved \$97,200 in funding from the Waste Minimisation Fund for the Battery Industry Group (BIG) to research and develop a co-designed scheme for large batteries, which include from both stationary energy storage and EVs. The co-design group submitted their scheme proposal report to the Ministry for the Environment in May 2021.

You can find out more about the BIG battery product stewardship scheme at: [www.big.org.nz](http://www.big.org.nz). You can also find out more about regulated product stewardship at: [www.environment.govt.nz/what-government-is-doing/areas-of-work/waste/product-stewardship/](http://www.environment.govt.nz/what-government-is-doing/areas-of-work/waste/product-stewardship/). This work is the responsibility of the Minister for the Environment. Normally, I would transfer your request under section 14(b)(ii), however, I understand you have already made the same request to Minister Wood. Therefore, such a transfer is not necessary at this time. I trust the Minister will respond in due course.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Raj Nahna  
**Chief of Staff**