

# Office of Hon Nanaia Mahuta

MP for Hauraki-Waikato

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Minister of Local Government

Associate Minister for Māori Development



8 December 2021

Luke

[fyi-request-17352-da222f16@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-17352-da222f16@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Tēnā koe Luke

Thank you for your email of 27 October 2021 requesting information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) about the Government's engagement with the local government sector and the Department of Internal Affairs' (Department) advertising campaign in relation to the Three Waters Reform Programme (Reform Programme).

On 11 November 2021, pursuant to sections 15A(1)(a) and (b) of the Act, I extended the date to respond to your request to 8 December 2021.

Set out below are my separate responses to the five parts of your request.

1. *Please provide the number of submissions on the proposed Three Waters reforms that have personally been read in full by the Minister.*
2. *Please provide a summary percentage number of the number read in full by the Minister classified as either in favour, partially in favour, opposed or partially opposed to the reforms.*

In response to Part 1 of your request, I do not hold a record of the number of submissions I personally read. All submissions were thoroughly reviewed and analysed by the Department as the lead agency of the Reform Programme, and in October 2021 I received advice and recommendations on those submissions in the form of a Summary Report (Summary Report) from the Department. The Summary Report is available online at the following link: [www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/three-waters-reform-programme-2021/\\$file/summary-of-submissions-report-final-with-appendix](http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/three-waters-reform-programme-2021/$file/summary-of-submissions-report-final-with-appendix).

The Department has published the formal council submissions, alongside the Summary Report, at the following link: [www.dia.govt.nz/local-government-feedback-on-reform-proposals-three-waters-reform-programme#individual-local-government-submissions](http://www.dia.govt.nz/local-government-feedback-on-reform-proposals-three-waters-reform-programme#individual-local-government-submissions).

I am therefore refusing Part 1 of your request for "... *the number of submissions on the proposed Three Waters reforms that have been personally read in full by the Minister*" under section 18(g) of the Act on the basis that the information is not held by me or another department or Minister of the Crown.

I am also refusing Part 2 of your request for "... *a summary percentage number of the number read in full by the Minister classified as either in favour, partially in favour, opposed or partially opposed to the reforms*" under section 18(g) of the Act on the basis that the information is not held by me or another department or Minister of the Crown.

As detailed in the Summary Report, 27 submissions noted that the status quo is unsustainable, and 39 submissions agreed that all New Zealanders should have access to safe drinking water, and that three waters activities should improve outcomes for the environment.

While many acknowledged there is a case for change, about 75 per cent of the submissions stated they did not support the proposed model put forward by the Government.

While most councils noted they did not convey a decision because they were not required to do so, or were silent on this matter in their submissions, eight councils reported taking a decision to provisionally opt out of the reforms.

I do not hold further information in this regard. This is because, as part of the Department's engagement with councils over August and September 2021, councils were not asked to take any formal decisions regarding the reform or respond to specific questions for the purpose of collecting quantitative data. Rather, they were asked in an open-ended way to provide the Department with their feedback on the proposals.

Summaries of *Emerging themes and issues from engagement with local government* and *Emerging themes from engagement with iwi/Maori* are in **Appendices B and C** of the 18 October 2021 Cabinet paper, which can be viewed at the following link: [www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/three-waters-reform-programme-2021/\\$file/cabinet-paper-three-waters-reforms-further-decisions-18-october-2021](http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/three-waters-reform-programme-2021/$file/cabinet-paper-three-waters-reforms-further-decisions-18-october-2021).

3. *Please provide detail of consultation meetings held with local councils on the proposed reforms.*

Details of the engagement with local government (and iwi, industry bodies and other stakeholders) on the proposed reforms are in **Appendix A** of the 18 October 2021 Cabinet paper which can be viewed at the following link: [www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/three-waters-reform-programme-2021/\\$file/cabinet-paper-three-waters-reforms-further-decisions-18-october-2021](http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/three-waters-reform-programme-2021/$file/cabinet-paper-three-waters-reforms-further-decisions-18-october-2021).

4. *Please provide copies of any brief provided to the minister on the advertising campaign for the reforms. This includes draft copies, timeline updates of the campaign and general updates on the campaign.*

I have provided four documents and extracts from 12 documents in scope of this part of your request, which I am releasing in full. These are detailed in **Appendix A** attached.

5. *Please provide copies of any feedback provided by the minister on the advertising campaign for the reforms.*

I did not provide the Department with any written feedback on the advertising campaign for the reforms. I am therefore refusing this part of the request under section 18(e) of the Act on the basis that *the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist*.

You have the right, under s 28(3) of the Act, to seek an investigation and review of this decision by the Office of the Ombudsman. The postal address of the Office of the Ombudsman is PO Box 10152, Wellington. Alternatively, you can phone 0800 802 602 or email [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz).

Nāku noa

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Mahuta', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Hon Nanaia Mahuta  
**Minister of Local Government**