

31 January 2022

Mark Williams
fyi-request-17927-2aca58fe@requests.fyi.org.nz

REF: OIA-9221

Dear Mark

Request made under the Official Information Act 1982

Thank you for your email of 13 December 2021 requesting information regarding the processing times for third-party Demerit Point and Suspension History (DSH) requests under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

Prior to responding to your request, you have asked for an explanation as to why the task of processing DSH requests falls under the responsibilities of a 'Debt Management Officer'.

To provide clarification, the relevant Debt Management team (Debt Services) consists of staff members employed in the positions of Debt Services Support and Debt Services Officers. DSH requests are currently processed by Debt Services Support employees.

Debt Services Support employees are responsible for processing financial transactions such as taking credit card payments and generating invoices for DSH requests, amongst other tasks. As there is a financial aspect to DSH requests, Debt Services Support employees were delegated with the task of processing DSH reports.

With that said, there are currently discussions underway regarding the suitability of this function sitting with the Debt Management team.

With regard to the remainder of your request, I have addressed each part in turn below.

1. How many requests for demerit points and driver suspension histories has NZTA received in the last 12 months?

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency has received a total of 9920 DSH requests from November 2020 until December 2021.

2. In the last six months, and the six months before that, what is the average turnaround time (in whole working-days), for completing these requests? Please separate the average turnaround time for the first six months and second six months, for comparison purposes.

While Waka Kotahi attempts to respond to a DSH request within four to six working days, it does not measure and maintain a record of the average turnaround time for completing these requests.

Therefore, I am refusing this part of your request under section 18(e) of the Act as the document alleged to contain the information does not exist.

3. Is any company, organisation or Government agency given priority with their requests above any other third-party requester? If yes, please identity all organisations and elaborate on why they are given priority and whether they pay for the service, or pay a premium for having their requests treated with priority.

Waka Kotahi processes DSH requests in the order that they are received. Waka Kotahi does not prioritise requests from any particular applicant over another.

4. What income in the last 12 months has NZTA received for providing the driver demerit points and driver suspension history service?

In accordance with Treasury requirements, the New Zealand driver licensing systems are based on the principle of cost-recovery (commonly known as 'user-pays'). The application fee of \$11.10 per DSH request is set in such a way that those who use this service are charged appropriately.

Waka Kotahi receives no income from providing the DSH report service. Rather, the DSH fee covers the cost to Waka Kotahi for administering this service, including processing the applications, the resources used and ongoing systems maintenance.

As Waka Kotahi has received 9920 DSH requests from November 2020 until December 2021, the total amount received during this period is \$110,112.00 (including GST).

5. What has been the direct cost to NZTA in providing this service in the last 12 months? Please do not include any other duties staff providing this service might undertake, such as "debt management" or requests from members of the public about the status of their own demerit points.

Please refer to my response to question 4.

As Waka Kotahi provides the DSH report service on a cost-recovery basis, it has cost Waka Kotahi \$110,112.00 (including GST) to provide this service between November 2020 and December 2021.

You may be interested to know, the DSH application fee is one of many fees reviewed as part of the Regulatory Fees and Funding review to ensure it is still fit for purpose. The review will be open to public consultation in 2022. This is the first comprehensive review of fees and charges Waka Kotahi has undertaken since 2008.

Information on the Regulatory Fees and Funding review is available on the Waka Kotahi website at: www.nzta.govt.nz/regulatory/regulatory-funding-and-fees-review/

6. How many NZTA staff are employed in providing this service and how many hours per day, on average, does each employee spend on attending to third-party requests for driver demerit points and driver suspension histories.

Waka Kotahi currently has two staff members employed in the position of Debt Services Support. Employees in this position are responsible for processing all DSH requests.

Third party DSH requests made up 7470 of the 9920 DSH requests received in the last 12 months. As such, Waka Kotahi estimates that one staff member spends three hours per working day attending to third party DSH requests.

7. For the NZTA staff who provide this service, what other duties do they perform and how are they instructed to prioritise third-party requests for demerit points and driver suspension histories, in comparison to their other duties?

Other duties performed at present by employees in the position of Debt Services Support include:

- Processing the following transactions:
 - Payment Demand Notices (MR1C)
 - Requests for Motor Vehicle Details (MR32 form)
 - Change of Registered Person bulk requests (MR13B form)
 - Application to Change Licence Expiry Date (MR27 form)
 - Application to Cancel Registration (MR15 form)
 - Application for Storage Provider to Cancel Registration (MR15A form)
 - Application for Replacement Driver Licence and/or Extension of Drivers Licence (DL2A form)
 - DSH requests from licence holders
- Financial processing of any cash payments received.
- Conducting general administrative tasks including setting up accounts and files in the financial processing system.
- Responding to email and phone enquiries pertaining to the above applications and transactions.
- Maintain procedural notes and knowledge base information pertaining to the above applications and transactions.
- Personal/professional development plans, team building, and training also form part of each employees' accountabilities.

With regard to how staff members prioritise third party DSH requests over their other duties, other than endeavouring to keep each task within the stated turnaround time, there is no priority assigned to the order of tasks in general. However, Waka Kotahi will assign priority to particular tasks, including third party DSH requests, should volumes increase or there is unexpected staff absences or turnover to manage.

8. What is the direct dial telephone number to speak with an NZTA employee specifically responsible for processing third-party requests for demerit points and driver suspension histories in circumstances where a request is long outstanding? Please do not give us the NZTA 0800 number as from repeated experience your call center staff have no idea who to put us through to, or the call is disconnected.

The Waka Kotahi staff processing third party DSH requests are logged into a queue through our phone system managed by the Contact Centre. You can dial 0800 822 422 and ask to speak with someone regarding an outstanding DSH request. Ordinarily, the Customer Service Representative in

the Contact Centre will dial through to the Customer Payment Admin queue on your behalf to follow up on the DSH request. Alternatively, they may transfer you to the queue, where your call is presented to the person in the Debt Services Support team who is logged into the phone system.

9. What is the direct e-mail address for us to send follow-up requests regarding out-standing third-party requests for demerit points and driver suspension histories? Please do not provide the email address DSH@nzta.govt.nz as in the past we have embedded "read receipt" coding in emails sent to that address and found that emails may not be read for up to two weeks.

You can email any outstanding DSH requests to Katie Hodson, Manager Debt Management, by email at katie.hodson@nzta.govt.nz. Ms Hodson will then follow up on your request.

10. Because we have embedded "read receipt" requests in our requests in recent months on account of the poor turnaround we have become aware that our requests to the NZTA email address DSH@nzta.govt.nz will sit there for up to two weeks, before being read. Given you are charging for this service, could you please explain why you are not assigning sufficient staff to process these requests in a more timely manner?

Staff turnover, annual leave and training all factor into the reasons as to why this function may have fallen outside of the stated turnaround time. Waka Kotahi has recently completed recruitment into the Debt Services team and have all, but two positions filled. As we go through training with our new staff, it is expected that most DSH requests will be actioned sooner than the stated turnaround time, allowing for room to move if we experience such issues.

Further, in addition to these immediate actions, we have had work underway to automate DSH requests and other services/reports by making them accessible online with an instant result. We have also continued discussions with other business groups within Waka Kotahi on the suitability of this function sitting with Debt Management.

Under section 28 of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review my decision to refuse part of your request. The contact details for the Ombudsman can be located at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

If you would like to discuss this reply with Waka Kotahi, please contact Ministerial Services by email at official.correspondence@nzta.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely



Sam du Fresne

Senior Manager Commercial Licensing and Revenue