



19 September 2023

John Miller

By email: fyi-request-23775-ada4a224@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe John

I refer to your request for information dated 10 August 2023 made under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). You requested:

“all communications (such as emails, letters) held by the University of Otago relating to the protest that occurred on the 1st of August, 2023, in the Commerce Building [Otago Business School]. This should include both internal communication between University staff, and also external communication.”

Following consultation with you, you agreed by email confirmation dated 22 August 2023, to limit the scope of your request to communications held by the Chancellor, Acting Vice-Chancellor, Proctor, Deputy Proctor, Chief Operating Officer, and Campus Constable.

Firstly, we need to clarify one matter. The Campus Constable is not a member of University staff and therefore is outside of the scope of this information request. Although the Campus Constable has a university email address, this account is used exclusively for conducting his Police business. We apologise that we did not advise you of this in our email of 25 August 2023.

Subject to the following comments, please see attached information within scope of your request:

- We have determined that it is appropriate to redact or withhold personal information, including contact details (e.g., names, student ID numbers, mobile phone numbers and email addresses). We note that some of this information relates to students or members of the media who contacted the University in relation to the incident, or non-senior staff who were present at the time of the protest. We withhold this information pursuant to section 9(2)(a) of the Act as we consider that it is necessary to protect the privacy of these individuals.
- Material has been withheld or redacted in order to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions between members of an organisation. This is pursuant to section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act. It is important that our staff are able to freely express their opinions, ideas and concerns in a sincere and honest manner in relation to current issues and incidents. Our view is that releasing this information would inhibit the future expression of free and frank opinions, as it would discourage future disclosure and engagement, thereby preventing University staff from providing or receiving the information and advice they need to do their jobs and make good and informed decisions in the context of live issues and incidents. Information withheld or redacted includes:

- a draft response to a media request, which comes under this exception. However, we note that we have provided the final version of this response in the attached information.
- internal discussions between staff from our Proctors Office and Property Services Division in relation to damage cost estimates as part of the Police investigation.
- We have also redacted or withheld information that is out of scope of your request. This applies to most of the redactions that have been made.

In the above cases, we consider that good reasons exist for withholding information, and this is not outweighed by other considerations which would make it desirable, in the public interest, to make the information available. If you are not satisfied with our response to your information request, section 28(3) of the Act provides you with the right to ask an Ombudsman to investigate and review this response. However, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss any concerns with you first.

Ngā mihi



Kelsey Kennard
Official Information and Compliance Coordinator
Office of the Registrar