

12 January 2024

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OIA 28907

Tēnā koe Jake Bengé

I refer to your email of 19 November 2023 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

'all information and documentation pertaining to trade with Israel. This encompasses any and all communications with the Israeli Government and lobby groups, both within New Zealand and Israel. Additionally, I am seeking any correspondence between Members of Parliament and Israeli officials and/or business-related entities or individuals.'

On 27 November 2023, we emailed you to clarify and refine your request as follows:

- 1. Will you accept a refinement for the first portion of your request to be for: Formal advice to Ministers predominantly regarding trade with Israel (i.e. where 50% or more of the item is on the topic or, the title of the item includes the term that was asked for).*
- 2. Will you accept a refinement for the second portion of your request to be for: Formal communication between MFAT and the Israeli Government that predominately relates to trade with Israel.*
- 3. You asked for communications between MFAT and lobby groups relating to trade with Israel. Please list the organisations that you define as lobby groups.*
- 4. Will you accept a refinement of the timeframe of all portions of your request to be for 1 calendar year. Please specify which year you would like?*

On 28 November 2023 you responded and clarified:

I am happy with what you've stated in 1, 2 and 4.

For 4, may I please date it from one year today (28th of November 2022 - 28th November 2023)

The lobby groups (3) I am interested in are the Israeli Business Innovation Hub, Israel Institute of New Zealand and although not a lobby group in Israel, may I also include the Auckland Chamber of Commerce (pertaining to Israel only)?

As such your request has been refined to:

1. Formal advice to Ministers predominantly regarding trade with Israel (i.e. where 50% or more of the item is on the topic or, the title of the item includes the term that was asked for).
2. Formal communication between MFAT and the Israeli Government that predominately relates to trade with Israel
3. communications between MFAT and Israeli Business Innovation Hub, Israel Institute of New Zealand and the Auckland Chamber of Commerce relating to trade with Israel
4. The timeframe of this request is from 28 November 2022 to 28 November 2023.

In response to part one of your request, no formal advice has been provided to Ministers on trade with Israel in this timeframe. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the information requested does not exist.

Regarding part two of your request, there has been no formal communication between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (the Ministry) and the Israeli Government that predominately relates to trade with Israel in this timeframe. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the information requested does not exist.

However, on 19 March 2023, Ministry officials had formal consultations with Israeli officials in which trade was a small part of the agenda. This information is contained within the following two documents:

1. *The technology, science, innovation, trade and economic relations* briefing contained within the briefing pack titled; *Foreign Ministry Consultations, New Zealand – Israel, 17 March 2023*; and
2. *FORMAL MESSAGE: ISRAEL: FOREIGN MINISTRY CONSULTATIONS, TEL-AVIV, 19 MARCH* is a post-meeting email that contains some information in scope of your request.

Please find the documents listed above attached. We have withheld some information under the following sections of the OIA:

- 6(a): to avoid prejudicing the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the New Zealand Government;
- 6(b)(i): to protect the passing of information from another government on a confidential basis;
- 9(2)(g)(i): to protect the free and frank expression of opinions by departments; and
- 9(2)(j): to avoid prejudice to negotiations.

Regarding part three of your request, there have been no communications between the Ministry and the Israeli Business Innovation Hub, the Israel Institute of New Zealand, or the Auckland Chamber of Commerce relating to trade with Israel in this timeframe. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the information requested does not exist.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Therefore, our response to your request (with your personal information removed) may be published on the Ministry website: www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/contact-us/official-information-act-responses/

If you have any questions about this decision, you can contact us by email at: DM-ESD@mfat.govt.nz. You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision by contacting www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SC', written in a cursive style.

Sarah Corbett
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade