



OIA24-0236

1 May 2024

Matt Grey

fyi-request-26387-fe89a87a@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Matt Grey

Thank you for your email of 10 April 2024 requesting correspondence between Ray Smith and Neil Cherry. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

You requested the following:

Can I please have a record of all written correspondence between the Director-General (Mr Smith) and Deputy-Director General for Corporate Services (Mr Cheery) from 1 March 2024 onwards. This written material only includes messages sent between both individuals on the Microsoft Teams application and any cellphone messaging application including SMS.

The Government set the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) a 7.5% budget reduction target effective from 1 July 2024. MPI's budget reduction work will include a mix of programme reductions and the staffing proposals currently out for consultation. MPI is not proposing any reductions to frontline services and statutory roles, such as veterinarians, animal welfare, fishery and food compliance officers, or biosecurity teams at the border. MPI is currently consulting with staff and no final decisions have been made.

Please find attached as Appendix One text messages between Director-General Ray Smith and Deputy-Director General, Corporate Services, Neil Cherry.

Some information included in this correspondence is budget sensitive and is therefore withheld pursuant to section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the OIA - *to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials.*

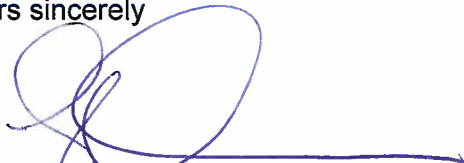
Additionally, some information has been withheld pursuant to section 9(2)(g)(i) of the OIA - *to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any department or organisation in the course of their duty.*

Please note there are no Microsoft Teams messages between Neil Cherry and Ray Smith between 1 March 2024 – 10 April 2024. Therefore this part of your request is declined pursuant to section 18(g) of the OIA - *that the information requested is not held by the department or venture or Minister of the Crown or organisation and the person dealing with the request has no grounds for believing that the information is either held by another department (for itself and for a departmental agency hosted by it or an interdepartmental executive board serviced by it) or interdepartmental venture or Minister of the Crown or organisation, or by a local authority*

MPI is satisfied that in the circumstances of this case, the withholding of the information is not outweighed by other considerations which render it desirable in the public interest to make the information available.

Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise these with the Ministry for Primary Industries at Official.InformationAct@mpi.govt.nz. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143 or at info@ombudsman.parliament.nz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'G' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Gillon Carruthers
Deputy Director-General, Public Affairs