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Jo Currie
Address Not Provided

Via email: fyi-request-26650-68fa58f9@requests.fyi.org.nz

31 May 2024

Dear Ms Currie

Official Information Act request dated 6 May 2024

We refer to your email dated 7 May 2024 (your **Request**) requesting information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the **Act**) in relation to TVNZ's News and Current Affairs programme Q+A. TVNZ's Response is set out below.

Request 1: Please provide the latest editorial policy handbook for TVNZ. If different, please provide the editorial policy handbook for Q&A and highlight the differences between this and the editorial policy handbook for TVNZ. In the event you are unable to provide an editorial policy handbook for TVNZ, as it varies per show, please provide the 1 News at Six editorial policy handbook, and the Q&A handbook, and highlight any differences between the two.

Response 1: There are two relevant documents that are responsive to this request.

The first is the News and Current Affairs Handbook. Disclosure of the Handbook in its entirety has been withheld on the basis of section 9(2)(b) of the Act: to protect information where the making available of the information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information. That is, the Handbook is TVNZ's intellectual property and the release of it would unreasonably prejudice our commercial position. However, in accordance with the Act's principle of transparency and to assist with your request, we have reproduced relevant sections in our response 3 below.

The second responsive document is TVNZ's Editorial Standards. Your request for the Editorial Standards is declined on the basis of section 18(d) of the Act: TVNZ's Editorial Standards are soon to be made publicly available. We are happy to write to you to let you know once they have been public released.

There is no standalone handbook for Q+A.

Request 2: Regarding Q&A, please provide information on how questions for interviewees are formulated. Specifically, who formulates the questions? Is it a research team, senior producers, the host?

Response 2: Questions for Q+A interviewees are formulated in accordance with our Editorial Standards, the News and Current Affairs Handbook, and in compliance with the requirements of the Broadcasting Standards as prescribed by the Broadcasting Act 1989.

Specific details as to the formulation of questions with respect to Q+A have been withheld on the following grounds:

- Section 9(2)(b) of the Act: to protect information where the making available of the information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information;
- Section 9(2)(g) of the Act: to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by members of an organisation in the course of their duty; and
- Section 9(2)(i) of the Act: to enable TVNZ to carry out, without prejudice or disadvantage, commercial activities.

For context, please note that in order to operate free of influence and without fear or favour, TVNZ treats its *internal* news and current affairs operations as commercially sensitive; release of information about how we produce our news and current affairs content would put us at strategic disadvantage to our competitors in the media industry, would mean we could not carry out free and frank editorial discussions, and would mean we could not produce news and current affairs content without disadvantage.

Request 3: Please provide information on TVNZ, Q&A, and/or 1 News at Six's standard policy on the extent of input interviewees are given. Specifically, can interviewees or their representatives request or negotiate that specific questions are asked? Can interviewees or their representatives arrange, prior to interviews, for specific questions not to be asked?

Response 3: Interviewees are free to request whatever they choose. However, TVNZ journalists are bound by the News and Current Affairs Handbook, the relevant excerpt of which provides:

The principle of editorial independence recognises the vital importance of separating control of editorial content from commercial or political interference, whether inside or outside TVNZ. Operating without fear or favour is fundamental to an objective and impartial newsroom, and critical to a free and democratic society. Editorial decisions in NCA must be made freely, based solely on recognised principles of objective journalism.

In accordance with the Act's principle of transparency and to assist with your request, we note that Q+A does not negotiate with interviewees regarding interview questions.

Request 4: Please provide information on TVNZ (specifically pre-recorded shows) and Q&A's standard policy/practice regarding the extent of approval interviewees or their representatives have on what is shown/broadcasted. Specifically, are interviewees or their representatives given the authority to approve a final cut for broadcast?

Response 4: Q+A does not provide interviewees with approval rights.

Request 5: Please provide information on TVNZ (specifically pre-recorded shows) and Q&A's standard policy/practice regarding the extent of input interviewees or their

representatives have on the editing process? Specifically, are interviewees or their representatives given the opportunity to make suggestions/requests/demands during the editing process?

Response 5: Q+A does not provide interviewees with editing rights.

Request 6: Please provide any internal communications and/or guidance provided to Q&A or Television New Zealand Limited employees and/or contractors including reporters and/or editors on the application or relevance of TVNZ's Editorial Policy in relation to Israel's war on Gaza.

Response 6: Recent editorial guidance on reporting in the Middle East is attached.

Request 7: Please provide any official communications and/or guidance provided to Television New Zealand Limited or Q&A from the Ministry of Broadcasting, Communications and Digital Media of New Zealand in relation to Israel's war on Gaza.

Response 7: Section 18(e) of the Act applies to this request; the information does not exist. To be clear, no official communications and/or guidance has been provided to Television New Zealand Limited or Q&A from the Ministry of Broadcasting, Communications and Digital Media of New Zealand in relation to Israel's war on Gaza.

Finally, in accordance with the Act's principle of transparency and in order to assist with your query, we direct you to the Broadcasting Standards as set out in the Broadcasting Act 1989, to which TVNZ adheres.

We trust this information assists. As you may know, if you are dissatisfied with this response section 28 of the Act provides you with the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman in order to seek an investigation and review.

Yours sincerely,

**Official Information Requests Team
TVNZ**