



15/07/2024

Erika Whittome

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Tēnā koe Erika

OIA: 1331170 – Blocked advocacy service sites on school internet

Thank you for your email of 20 June 2024 to the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) requesting the following information:

N4L has many safe lists and blocked lists for schools' internet access. One of the categories that is blocked on school internet is the category "Advocacy Services".

I request all the information on this category Advocacy Services since 1 Jan 2020,

- 1. the lists of the sites that are blocked under the category Advocacy Services*
- 2. the meeting minutes, memos, ICT tickets etc for each of these advocacy services sites for when the request to Block them and the decision to block them was actioned by N4L. This request is for the meeting minutes, memos, etc since 1 Jan 2020*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

The Ministry contracts Network for Learning (N4L) to provide internet connectivity for state and state integrated schools. This includes web content filtering, DNS filtering and safe search enforcement.

Schools and kura in Aotearoa are self-governing through their boards and have autonomy over the approaches they take to web content filtering. Individual schools choose whether to use N4L services, and some schools choose to use alternative solutions for content filtering and internet activity monitoring.

N4L's filtering system provides individual schools with the option to block access across a wide variety of categories, of which 'advocacy services' is one. N4L and the Ministry do not make decisions about which categories are blocked; each individual school determines what is appropriate for it and its community.

In response to **part one** of your request, I understand that the work to identify and categorise sites is not conducted by N4L or the Ministry, but rather by third-party technology vendors who provide the filtering systems N4L uses. Neither the Ministry nor N4L holds lists of sites that are blocked under the 'advocacy services' category. As such, I am refusing **part one** of your request under section 18(g) of the Act, as the information requested is not held by the Ministry, and we have no



grounds for believing that the aggregate information requested is either held by, or more closely connected to the functions of, another department or organisation subject to the Act.

N4L does, at the request of a school, have the ability to either add a site to the list of sites blocked or to remove a site from the blocked list. N4L and the Ministry do not initiate these processes, as this is autonomously managed by schools.

In response to **part two** of your request, I can confirm that the Ministry did not conduct meetings, nor did we write memos or open ICT tickets that requested N4L to block advocacy services. Neither do we hold any documents that record decisions to block advocacy sites in schools. Therefore, I am refusing this part of your request under section 18(e) of the Act, as the documents alleged to contain the information requested do not exist.

Please note, we may publish this response on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.

Thank you again for your email. You have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review my decision on your request, in accordance with section 28 of the Act. You can do this by writing to info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or to Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Nāku noa, nā



Stuart Wakefield
Chief Digital Officer
Te Pou Hanganga, Matihiko | Infrastructure and Digital