

Peter Grayell  
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1 November

Dear Peter,

## **OIA 24-25-29: NZTE Pounamu Awards Costs**

Thank you for your email of 3 October to New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE), making a request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). You requested the following information:

*I am writing to request information under the Official Information Act 1982 concerning the costs incurred by NZTE for its internal awards programme held annually (Pounamu Awards). As a taxpayer concerned with the effective and efficient use of public funds, I am interested in understanding the financial implications and justifications of this internal awards programme. I understand NZTE pays for an EXTERNAL COMPANY to supply the technical and broadcast services, using taxpayer money for what sounds like an internal awards show.*

*Specifically, I would like to obtain detailed information on the following:*

### **1. TOTAL EXPENDITURE**

- *The total annual cost of organising and executing the internal awards programmes for the past five fiscal years. This is to include:*

#### **A. EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS**

- *Details of contracts or agreements with external partners who assist in running the technical aspects of the awards programmes, including the selection process for these partners, contract durations, specific support provided, and the costs involved. Please be clear on the reason an external technology partner is required.*

#### **B. BREAKDOWN OF COSTS**

- *Travel Expenses: Costs associated with flights, accommodation, and any per diem allowances for participants, staff, and executives involved.*
- *Venue and Catering: Expenses for physical venues (if applicable) and any catering or hospitality services provided. Include alcoholic beverages as a separate line.*
- *Frequency and Participation: The number of times the show is conducted annually and duration*

#### **C. ASSESSMENT OF OUTCOMES AND JUSTIFICATION**

- *Provide any analysis on the Return on Investment (ROI) this use of taxpayer money provides*
- *What measures, if any, have been taken to reduce costs associated with the awards programme*
- *Please include discussions (texts, emails, summaries) of alternative methods considered for recognising staff achievements that may offer cost savings*

*Understanding these costs and their justifications is important for fostering transparency about the use of public funds and assessing the overall value these programmes bring to both the organisation and the public. Given the significant resources that appear to be dedicated to this show/events (including in collective employee time), it is in the public interest to ensure that such expenditures are justified and provide tangible benefits.*

Answers to your questions are as follows.

The Pounamu Awards are NZTE's annual all-of-organisation internal recognition programme to recognise individuals and teams across NZTE.

The awards bring all international and New Zealand offices together. They are an important part of supporting a performance culture in the organisation by recognising performance across NZTE's globally dispersed teams including 620 employees, across a global footprint of 37 offices. The recognition programme did not include prizes of any kind. The costs associated relate to supporting the format of the programme.

Since 2020, the celebration has been conducted annually via Zoom and runs for approximately two hours. There are usually three sessions run to accommodate the international time differences. However, this year, to reduce costs, NZTE took the approach to run only two sessions. This meant some teams joined outside of business hours.

Note the awards typically occur a month or two following the end of the financial year and look back over the previous financial year.

The spend on external contracts has reduced by 41% this year compared to the last time the awards were run. The partners were selected for their expertise and experience with NZTE; engagement terms were confirmed annually.

NZTE is conscious of demonstrating fiscal constraint and this is balanced against ensuring we recognise our people and support a high-performance culture, to help grow exporters internationally.

1. Please find details on contractors used to assist with the NZTE Pounamu Awards for the last five fiscal years in Appendix One. Existing service providers were used. External tech partners allow NZTE to ensure the awards are able to be undertaken globally. NZTE does not have the technical hardware to deliver awards of this scale and complexity. Specifically, to undertake the following:
  - Edit video content to share across the organisation.
  - Play regional video content.
  - Manage live crosses with 37 international offices.
2. Please find a breakdown of costs for the NZTE Pounamu Awards by year since June 2020/21 in Appendix Two.
3. The Pounamu Awards are about recognising individual and team performance and connecting the global team at NZTE, to support the growth of New Zealand Exporters. It is not possible to measure a specific ROI to the event itself, however we can measure the overall impact for export customers and employee engagement. These metrics are readily available in our Annual Report ([Reports and publications | NZTE](#)).

The programme is timed alongside NZTE's Lead Team meeting schedule to ensure no additional travel costs are incurred by this group.

For the 2024 event cost savings measures were undertaken by reducing the number of shows from three to two.

You have the right under section 28(3) of the Act to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at: [www.ombudsman.parliament.govt.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.govt.nz) or freephone: 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melissa Trochon', written in a cursive style.

Melissa Trochon  
**Director – Board & Ministerial**

## Appendix One: Details of External Providers

Company Contracted	Total expenditure by fiscal year (all including GST)	Specific Support
<p>Multi-Media Systems</p> <p>NZTE started working with Multi-Media Systems in 2015. NZTE continued to use this company from 2020, when it moved to a fully virtual event due to COVID-19 restrictions.</p> <p>Contract duration starts three months ahead of the event and immediately concludes following delivery.</p>	<p>2020/21 \$22,796</p> <p>2021/22: \$24,700</p> <p>2022/23: \$24,540</p> <p>2023/24: N/A</p> <p>2024/25: \$12,641</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Studio - Lighting/Lectern/ Green screen/ cameras/ foldback monitors/ cables.</li> <li>• Control room - Production computer/ laptops/audio console/ lapel microphones/ switchers/vision mixing/ foldback monitor/network/ cables.</li> <li>• Green room – LCD monitor/ laptop/ speaker system/ cables.</li> <li>• Labour - vision operator/Zoom operator/camera operator/graphics operator/audio operator/ show caller.</li> <li>• Video editing.</li> <li>• Other expenses – software licensing/ health &amp; safety compliance/ crew meals/ data/pre-production/equipment insurance/ sundry.</li> </ul>
<p>Connect NZ (Zoom’s event arm)</p>	<p>2020/21 \$474</p> <p>2021/22: \$474</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zoom licensing.</li> <li>• Provide services to ensure global connectivity and enabling Multi-Media.</li> </ul>
<p>Virtual Event Elves</p> <p>Contract duration starts three months ahead of the event and immediately concludes following delivery.</p>	<p>2022/23: \$6,857</p> <p>2023/24: N/A</p> <p>2024/25: \$4,496</p>	<p>Virtual Event Elves lead the delivery of the shows ensuring global connectivity and enabling Multi-Media to produce the technical content.</p>

## Appendix Two: Breakdown of Costs

Financial Year	Travel Expenses (NZD\$ including GST) *	External Provider Expenses (NZD\$ including GST)	Venue & Catering Expenses (NZD\$ including GST)	Alcohol Expenses (NZD\$ including GST)	Total Annual Cost (NZD\$ including GST)	Other Expenses (NZD\$ including GST)
July 2020 - June 2021	\$519	\$23,269	\$382	N/A	\$25,872	\$1,702
July 2021 - June 2022	\$220	\$25,174	\$929	N/A	\$30,528	\$4,205
July 2022 - June 2023	\$817	\$31,397	\$3,592	N/A	\$39,024	\$3,218
July 2023 - June 2024	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
July 2024 - June 2025	\$1,747	\$17,137	\$3,864	N/A	\$23,202	\$454

**\*Note** we have included the directly coded travel costs here. As noted in paragraph three above, the programme is timed alongside NZTE's Lead Team meeting schedule to ensure no additional travel costs are incurred by this group.