



19 December 2024

James
fyi-request-29155-543e822d@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: PMO 211-2024-25

Dear James

Official Information Act request: Communications about Aaron Smale

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request, received on 25 November 2024. You requested:

Under the OIA please provide all communications if any, concerning journalist Aaron Smale from July 2024 through to 12th November 2024.

A search of the records of this Office has been completed and the information in scope of your request is set out below.

Information being released:

I am releasing the following text messages:

- One text message conversation between Hamish Rutherford (the Prime Minister's Chief Press Secretary) and staff in the Office of the Speaker of the House.
- Two text message conversations between Hamish Rutherford and Newsroom staff.

The text messages being released are attached with a small amount of information being withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act, to protect personal privacy.

Two phone calls were made and are described below:

- One phone call on 24 July 2024 was made between the Prime Minister's Deputy Chief of Staff and Newsroom staff. It is described as follows: "July 24th – I rang Mark Jennings to say I was concerned about the welfare of Aaron Smale. *Remainder of the description of this call is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act, to protect personal privacy.*"
- One phone call was made on 8 November 2024 between the Prime Minister's Deputy Chief of Staff and the Office of the Speaker of the House. It is described as follows "8 November, 2024 – I called the speaker's office to check if Aaron Smale had applied for media accreditation and relayed our concerns about his behaviour."

There was also one phone call between me and a Newsroom journalist regarding my concerns with the Newsroom story on this matter.

Information being withheld:

This Office also holds one email, the details of which are withheld in full under section 6(d) of the Act, to protect the safety of individuals.

Where section 9 applies, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Act. No public interest has been identified that would be sufficient to outweigh the reasons for withholding that information.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

Yours sincerely



Cameron Burrows
Chief of Staff