



MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora

Ministry of Social Development, Bowen State Building, Bowen Street, Wellington 6011, PO Box 1556, Wellington 6140
• Telephone: 0-4-916 3300 • Facsimile: 0-4-918 0099

11 JUL 2012

Alex Harris
fyi-request-346-8140c3e4@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Alex Harris

Thank you for your emails of 7 June 2012 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following:

"How many submissions to the Reference Group suggested or advocated for a policy preventing abusive parents from having children?"

Has the Reference Group considered such a policy? If so, I would like all advice, discussion documents, and papers on the policy

If such a policy was suggested or considered, has the Minister been informed of it?"

And...

"This week, Social Development minister Paula Bennett told Radio NZ that the government was "considering a range of options to deal with the issue of known child abusers or killers having further children - including allowing the Court to direct someone convicted of serious child abuse or neglect or murder not to have more children" ("Govt: Abusers could have children taken away at birth", NZ Herald, 6 Jun 2012). I would like to request the following information under the Official Information Act 1982: all advice on this policy."

The Green Paper for Vulnerable Children invited New Zealanders from all over the country to have their say about how we value, nurture and protect children. Submissions on the Green Paper closed on 28 February 2012 and over 9,000 submissions have been received from individuals, families, children, community groups and organisations.

A Reference Group has been established to provide a forum for officials providing advice on the White Paper for Vulnerable Children to test policy development from a "frontline" perspective.

As no submissions have been made to the Reference Group your request has been interpreted to be for submissions on the Green Paper.

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The Ministry for Social Development is currently focused on analysing submissions on the Green Paper in preparation for the White Paper. As submissions are analysed it has become apparent that a small minority promoted stronger repercussions for those who neglect their parental responsibilities and/or abuse their children. However, there was not a specific question in any of the submission forms which is on preventing abusive parents from having children and the submissions have not been recorded in such a way that those which promote such an idea can easily be identified. Therefore in order to provide you with information on the number of submissions which advocated such a policy Ministry staff would have to manually review the submissions. This would take considerable time and adversely impact on the Ministry's ability to carry out its business as usual activities. This part of your request is therefore refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act as it would require substantial manual collation.

I am able to advise that the Reference Group has not considered any policy that relates to preventing abusive parents having children.

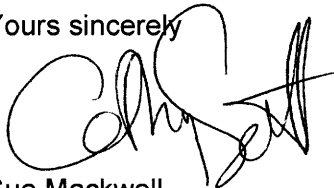
To date, the Ministry has not produced any in-depth advice on the relative merits or implications of specific options for adults who have seriously abused or killed young people who then go on to have more children. Your request is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act as no such information exists.

I note that as the White Paper is still under development, at this time I am withholding all information about proposals relating to the policies being considered under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Official Information Act 1982. I consider that, in this instance, the public interest in an open government is outweighed by the need for Ministers to be able to consider advice in confidence before a decision is made.

I hope you find this information about the White Paper helpful. You have the right to seek an investigation and review of my response by the Ombudsman, whose address for contact purposes is:

The Ombudsman
Office of the Ombudsmen
PO Box 10-152
WELLINGTON 6143

Yours sincerely



Sue Mackwell
Deputy Chief Executive, Social Policy and Knowledge

