

OIA Forum for Practitioners

Monday 20 August 2018 – 10am to 12pm

Venue: Aurora Conference Centre Room 1.1 Kakapo and 1.2 Kaka, Ministry of Social Development, 56 The Terrace, Wellington

Agenda:

10.00	Morning tea and networking
10.15	Introduction Lucy Alcock, Director Government Services, Department of Conservation - Facilitator
10:20	Welcome and opening remarks Catherine Williams, Deputy Commissioner, Integrity Ethics and Standards, SSC
10:30	Proactive release and publishing responses to OIA requests Erik Koed, Assistant Commissioner, SSC
10:45	Case study: Releasing weekly reports Tracy Plane, Manager Executive Relations, Ministry for the Environment
11.00	Redacting done right Adrian MacGregor, Principal Advisor, Ministerial and Executive Services, Ministry of Defence
11:25	Small group discussion and report back
11.55	Next steps, feedback, close.

Speaking notes - Catherine Williams

Summary of Speaking Points

- Thank you for coming today – it's fantastic to see so many people committing their precious time to what is an important topic. I'd also like to thank Lucy Alcock and the organising committee for arranging today's event.
- Today I want to talk to you about open government and official information.
- Importance of trust and integrity of the public service
- Spirit of service to the community – making a difference for New Zealand and New Zealanders.
- New Zealand is internationally recognised as having one of the most open and transparent governments in the world but we can't take this for granted.
- One of the ways we can continue to strengthen open government in New Zealand is through our membership of the Open Government Partnership. This is an international initiative that aims to secure commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, improve public services, prevent corruption, and use new technologies to strengthen governance.
- Government and citizens work together to develop a National Action Plan every two years. We're in the final stages of that process now. At the same time we're finishing off the 2016-18 plan. Many of your agencies are involved in that work.
- The current 2016-18 National Action Plan has a number of commitments that complement broader open government initiatives in the public sector, including a commitment led by SSC on official information.
- Compliance with the Official Information Act has been increasing in the last two years across government with the regular publication of agency performance statistics.
- Many Chief Executives are using these statistics to drive up performance in their agencies and are taking a keen personal interest in this area.
- In the most recent six month report, which is due to be released on 5 September, 62 agencies recorded 100% compliance with the legislated time limits, which is a great result. However, the statistics also show an overall decline in the proportion of OIA requests being

completed within the time limits since the previous six months. That isn't good enough – we need to take action now to make sure that that doesn't become a trend.

- Together we've done some great work over recent years to show that the public sector is committed to upping our game with official information. However, there is a strong expectation that we continue to do more and better. That's why, across all our agencies, we need to keep focused on doing the right thing every time. 100% compliance is not a target – it's a standard required under the Act and the public expects no less than 100% compliance. Releasing official information, whether proactively or when requested, is a key tool for enhancing transparency and promoting the accountability of officials and Ministers.
- Proactively releasing information also helps reduce the need for individuals to make OIA requests and it can reduce the work for agencies in responding to them.
- For these reasons, the Commission has been encouraging agencies to proactively release more information on their websites, including completed OIA requests.
- While the number of agencies proactively releasing responses to OIA requests is increasing, we still have a long way to go.
- By the end of the year, we expect to see a significant increase in the number of agencies with proactive release policies and practices in place for publishing OIA responses and other official information.
- Conclusion: We look forward to working with you to make this happen and encourage you to work with us and with each other to help strengthen our OIA and proactive release practices across the sector.

Proactive release and publishing responses to OIA requests

The Commission is encouraging agencies to proactively release more official information online including responses to OIA requests.

The SSC website has a range of information about proactive release:

- Our [guidance on developing a proactive release policy](#)
- [Practical tips](#) for putting in place processes for publishing completed OIA requests
- The [OIA statistics](#) which include information on the publication of OIA requests.

See PowerPoint slides.

Case study: Releasing weekly reports

The Ministry for the Environment presented to the forum on how they are approaching proactive release of information generally with a specific focus on the release of Ministers' weekly updates in terms of the process and some of the challenges encountered along the way.

See PowerPoint slides.

Redacting done right

The Ministry of Defence gave a presentation with useful tips on how to successfully redact text when preparing official information for release.

See PowerPoint slides.