

OIA Forum – 14 August 2017

Venue: Ministry of Justice, Wellington
Focus of the forum: Proactive Release



History of the Forum

The OIA Forum was initiated by the Ministry of Justice in 2013 as part of its official information work program, in response to the 2012 Law Commission report *The Public's Right to Know*. The task of the OIA Forum was 'to develop and implement practical improvements for key common issues'.

On 29 November 2016, the Secretary for Justice delegated the Ministry of Justice's function of providing advice and assistance on the Official Information Act, to the State Services Commissioner. With that delegation, came responsibility for facilitating this established OIA Forum. All department and statutory Crown entities to which the OIA applies are able to participate in the Forum.

Focus of this Forum

The focus of this forum was proactive release and was targeted towards information to assist agencies to develop their internal policies and practices that support increased proactive release.

Summary of Feedback from Forum

The OIA Forum was well attended with a wide variety of agencies represented. The topic of proactive release was well received and attendees welcomed the opportunity to network with other official information leaders from across the state sector.

The format was good and they welcomed having presentations on one topic from a variety of speakers and agencies, who all had different experiences of undertaking proactive release.

Attendees indicated that they would appreciate having access to policies and implementation plans from other agencies to use as guidance, especially on the principles to be applied when developing a proactive release policy. They considered it useful to work towards clarifying the criteria for information to be proactively released and agree it would be useful if there was consistency and cooperation between agencies on proactive releases of information. The SSC Proactive Release Guidance was welcomed but attendees see that additional guidance would also be useful, in particular on the release of third party information and the application of section 48 of the OIA.

The venue presented some difficulties for such a large group and SSC is looking at a number of other venues that could accommodate future Forums.

There were a number of suggestions made for future Forums which SSC is taking on board, including identifying how and when the Office of the Ombudsman should be involved; looking at Forums tailored to agency types or specific topics; more communication early on about topics and dates of upcoming Forums; and considering how often Forums are held and how long the event should run for.