



Te Kawa Mataaho

Public Service Commission

5 July 2021

9(2)(a) privacy

Dear 9(2)(a) privacy

Official Information Request Our Ref: OIA 2021-0072

I refer to your official information request received on 8 June 2021 where you asked:

"I've been directed to your webpage 'Pronoun use in email signatures':

<https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/our-work/diversity-and-inclusion/pronoun-use-in-email-signatures/>

Pursuant to the Official Information Act, can you please provide me with a copy of any advice given or received either prior to or post the formulation of this document regarding:

- the impact on female public servants (including the effects of unconscious bias and potential indirect sex discrimination) of the approach outlined in your policy;*
- the rights of public servants to freedom of belief (including the right to an absence of belief regarding gender identity) and freedom of speech;*
- whether it is consistent with the Privacy Act 2020 to require disclosure of sensitive personal information, either in email signatures or at the start of meetings;*
- Yogyakarta Principle 6, concerning the right to privacy in respect of gender markers."*

Information being released

Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission (the Commission) is committed to diversity and inclusion. We want to acknowledge and celebrate all voices and experiences across our Public Service and want a workforce that is inclusive of all the people that we work with and for.

The 'pronoun in email signature' resource has been developed for Public Service staff to use if they wish to do so. The resource was developed in response to the finding from the We Count survey, that pronouns and inclusive language matters. The We Count survey was published by the Commission in 2019 and can be found on our website [here](#).

The 'Pronoun in email signature' resource is not guidance or a directive and is in no way compulsory. It is up to each individual to decide whether they would like to use pronouns within their email signature block.

As the use of pronouns in email signatures is voluntary the Privacy Act 2020 and Yogyakarta principle 6 are not applicable in this case. The Commission does not require staff to disclose their pronouns and/or gender identity nor does it collect this information from staff email signatures. Our template signature blocks (simple and extended versions) make it clear that using pronouns is voluntary.

In response to your request for copies of any advice given or received prior or post the formulation of the “pronoun use in email signatures” document, the Commission does not hold any documents that fall within scope of your request. We are therefore refusing this part of your request under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act 1982 on the grounds that the information requested does not exist.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact Ministerial.Services@publicservice.govt.nz.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that we intend to publish this letter (with your personal details removed) on the Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission’s website.

Yours sincerely



Nicky Dirks

**Manager – Ministerial and Executive Services
Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission**