



10 June 2020

Dear [REDACTED]

**Official Information Request**  
**Our Ref: 2020-0043**

I refer to your official information request received on 12 May 2020 for:

*“reports (advice or analysis documents, not including correspondence) that include information and statistics on the number of employees, across all state services, who were able to log-in to work from home, and the number who had sufficient equipment to be able to work from home”.*

**Information being released**

On 23 March, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced that New Zealand would move to Alert Level 4 from midnight Wednesday 25 March 2020. Alert Level 4 was about stopping the spread of the virus and saving lives. It didn't mean everything stopped. It was essential that the Public Service kept working and delivering services for New Zealanders.

Public servants have a critical role in the Government's response to COVID-19. Our mission is to implement the Government's response effort, and keep the Public Service running to deliver the services that New Zealanders rely on.

This was undoubtedly one of the biggest challenges New Zealand has ever faced. And we all had a role to play, whether in frontline service delivery or working from home.

Under the [New Zealand Influenza Pandemic Plan](#) the State Services Commission (SSC) has a mandate to monitor workforce absence across the State sector. As part of our responsibility to make sure the State services workforce continues to deliver public services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the SSC was collecting agency's staff absence levels data every week.

A working group was also set up to support government organisations to maintain critical digital services to the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was led by the Government Chief Digital Officer (GCDO) at the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) and was connected to the Government's Operation Command Centre.

GCDO worked alongside Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) and the SSC to identify critical services, issues and supply chain challenges that required immediate attention. The GCDO and MBIE developed a framework ([Government ICT Prioritisation Framework during COVID-19](#)) to make sure constrained ICT resources went to support government organisations and services where they were needed most.

GCDO helped prioritise support for the following essential sectors and services that were supporting New Zealand through the Alert Level 4 response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC)
- Department of Corrections
- Inland Revenue (IR)
- Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)
- Ministry of Education (MoE)

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- Ministry of Health (MoH)
- Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- Ministry of Justice (MoJ)
- Ministry of Social Development (MSD)

In response to your request for "*reports (advice or analysis documents, not including correspondence) that include information and statistics on the number of employees, across all state services, who were able to log-in to work from home, and the number who had sufficient equipment to be able to work from home*", we are refusing your request under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) on the grounds that we do not hold this level of detailed information across all State services.

The level of detail you have asked for was the responsibility of agencies to both ensure the wellbeing of their staff and ensuring they had the tools to deliver not only essential services but all public services while NZ was under Alert Levels 4, 3 and 2.

The information that was being collected by SSC was providing assurance that agencies were able or had access to the support it required to continue delivering. While SSC's primary focus has been on the State services, we included other important bodies in our reporting so that Ministers and others have as complete a picture as possible of the State sector's ability to continue delivering in the current COVID-19 environment, whether they were delivering 'critical services' or not.

We are currently preparing the reports that were generated from this information to be released shortly. We will provide you the link to this information once it has been released.

While in the different Alert Levels, SSC has been issuing workforce guidance to assist agencies with workforce matters. These guidelines were updated as decisions about Alert Levels were being made and are all publicly available on the SSC website.

Agencies providing essential services have made significant accommodations to meet Alert Level 4 and 3 requirements and have further strengthened health and safety controls within their environments. This has helped facilitate safety at work for increased numbers of workers under Alert level 2. Other workplaces have used the time under Alert Level 3 to prepare for meeting Alert level 2 requirements and a return to work for significantly more employees.

It was important that agencies found the right balance between allowing the significant opening up of activity envisaged by Alert Level 2 and addressing the need to keep staff and others safe in the workplace as they do this.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact [Ministerial.Services@ssc.govt.nz](mailto:Ministerial.Services@ssc.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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that we intend to publish this letter (with your personal details removed) and enclosed documents on the State Services Commission's website.

Yours sincerely



Nicky Dirks  
**Managing Principal – Ministerial Services**  
**State Services Commission**