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**From:** Official Correspondence

**Sent:** Monday, 18 September 2023 12:56 pm

**To:** Kate Rose <Kate.Rose@parliament.govt.nz>

**Cc:** Leisa Coley <Leisa.Coley@nzta.govt.nz>; Prisca Gain <Prisca.Gain@parliament.govt.nz>

**Subject:** MIN-4311 RESPONSE RE: Vehicle licence (rego) scam

Kia ora Kate,

Please see the below information with respect to phishing emails and the Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency response.

**REQUEST:** What safeguards Waka Kotahi has in place for protecting people's info? – i.e. assurances that scammers are not able to access Waka Kotahi databases to get the names and contact details of persons whose rego is coming up for renewal.

**RESPONSE:** Waka Kotahi, NZ Transport Agency (Waka Kotahi) is committed to maintaining the security of its information through delivery of measures aligned to the New Zealand (NZ) Government Protective Security Requirements (PSR) and the New Zealand Information Security Manual (NZISM). As part of this commitment, Waka Kotahi performs Certification and Accreditation (C&A) of 'services', leveraging the Waka Kotahi C&A Framework. Risk assessments follow the Government Chief Digital Officer's (GCDO) information security risk assessment process, which is based on the AS/NZ ISO 31000:2009 and ISO/IEC 27005:2011 risk management standards.

Historically, the Motor Vehicle Register (MVR) was classed as a 'public register' since it was first established in 1924, and as such, registered person details were available from the register to any person paying the prescribed fee. If a person paid the prescribed fee and provided a vehicle's registration number, they would obtain the registered person's name and address.

On 1 April 2011, the Land Transport Act 1998 (the LTA) was amended to significantly restrict access to that information and only permits the release of personal information for the following purposes:

- enforcement of the law
- maintenance of the security of New Zealand
- collection of charges imposed or authorised by an enactment; and
- the administration and development of transport law and policy.

Anyone who wishes to obtain names and addresses held on the MVR outside of these purposes must make a request to Waka Kotahi which will be assessed in accordance with the provisions of the Official Information Act. Alternatively, any person or organisation may seek a special 'authorisation' under section 241 of the LTA to obtain information from the register. These authorisations go through a rigorous application process where Waka Kotahi consults with the Ombudsman, Privacy Commissioner and Police Commissioner (our advising agencies) before deciding whether the authorisation is granted. An authorisation should be for a specific purpose and is subject to any conditions specified by Waka Kotahi.

Further information regarding access to the MVR is available at:

<https://www.nzta.govt.nz/vehicles/how-the-motor-vehicle-register-affects-you/>

Phishing is a common form of email scam. In a phishing email, the sender pretends to be a trustworthy organisation – like a bank, delivery company or government agency – in an attempt to obtain personal information, particularly financial details. Phishing emails are most successful when they contain imagery that matches well-known brands. It is important to note that if someone receives a phishing email, it does not mean that Waka Kotahi systems have been compromised. Phishing scammers often employ different methods to source email addresses such as purchasing lists from the dark web/data providers or email harvesting, where bots are programmed to scour the internet for email addresses.

**REQUEST :** What, if anything, Waka Kotahi are doing to prevent people from becoming victims of this scam?

**RESPONSE:** Much like other entities, Waka Kotahi largely relies on the notification of phishing scams from the public and are not aware of definite figures of how many scam operations are active at any one time. Once Waka Kotahi has been made aware of several phishing scams, and in an attempt to notify members of the public, information relating to the latest phishing emails are published on our website at:

<https://www.nzta.govt.nz/online-services/report-a-phishing-scam/>

We have removed any clickable buttons and links within the reminder emails and this has led to a significant decrease in email phishing. The primary weapon we have against these threats is education. As such, we have pushed as much information and guidance as possible via Social Media and on our website.

Informing people that we no longer use links in emails is working, but the scammers are still trying the old methodology of including links. The better we educate our customers, the more effectively we can mitigate. As links are a very common method for unidentified parties to obtain personal or financial details, over time, the lack of clickable links will assist with determining a genuine email versus a fraudulent one.

While we are unable to track every scam that is currently active, we can advise that for the financial year 2021-2022, 173 websites were shut down by Fraudwatch at our request.

Ngā mihi  
Chanell

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