

17 February 2023

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Reporter  
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REF: OIA-11861

Dear Flynn

Thank you for your email of 16 January 2023 requesting the following information:

*... Waka Kotahi received a record number of complaints about vehicle damage caused by potholes in the first 10 months of 2022 (555 complaints compared with 421 in 2021).  
Is there any chance you could localise that data for Wairarapa?  
How many drivers in Wairarapa complained to Waka Kotahi about pothole damage in 2022?  
How many Wairarapa potholes were reported to Waka Kotahi in 2022?  
How many were fixed?  
Did any of those potholes need to be fixed multiple times , if so, which ones?*

Your request has been considered under the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). On 20 January 2023, you clarified your request to be for:

*Please change my request to Wellington area rather than Wairarapa if that makes it easier to search.  
If you're able to, can I specifically request for pothole repairs in Wellington contract area on SH2 and SH53?*

While we are challenged with more intense weather events and increasing demand on the network, our current focus is on improving the overall condition of the state highway network to be more resilient to these impacts. The 2021-24 National Land Transport Plan has provided a significant increase in maintenance funding with \$2.8 billion being invested into Maintenance and Operations. The current summer maintenance programme is targeting 2450 lane kilometres, the largest ever single-season programme on the state highway network.

Over the colder, wetter months (specifically May – August) we focus on 'holding' roads in their current state. This means you will see us filling potholes, undertaking minor repairs to failed sections of road, and other activities that ensure the road is operational. Full paving and surfacing remedial works need to be undertaken in the drier warmer (summer) months. Our contractors are required to formally inspect the state highway network on a regular basis, and during the wetter, colder months they will have teams patrolling the network to proactively fill potholes and undertake other quick maintenance activities.

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency complaint data is regionally-based, not highway-based. It is not collected in a form that allows complaints from different sub-areas of a region (e.g. Wairarapa within

Wellington) to be measured. This means we are unable to give specific complaint numbers for the Wairarapa region and can only provide it for the wider Wellington region. Further analysis would require individual assessment of each separate complaint and road issue in the Wellington region highway maintenance contract area. I am therefore refusing your request for data on SH2 and SH53 within the Wellington maintenance contracts under section 18(f) of the Act. This section provides for refusal when the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

Before I set out each of your questions and provides responses to these from the perspective of the Wellington highway maintenance area (as seen on our website at: <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/roads-and-rail/highways-information-portal/technical-disciplines/network-outcomes-contracts/resources-and-manuals/noc-supplier-maps/>), I would like to clarify the figure for the total number of pothole complaints quoted for 2022. Waka Kotahi issued a press release to clarify that the total number of complaints about 'pavement and surfacing or potholes' for 2022 was 351. More can be read on our website at: <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/media-releases/state-highway-pothole-complaints-not-as-high-as-reported/>.

*How many drivers in [Wellington area] complained to Waka Kotahi about pothole damage in 2022?*

As Waka Kotahi does not hold data in such a way that this question can be responded to accurately, I am refusing this under section 18(g)(i) of the Act. This section provides for refusal when the information requested is not held by the department or Minister of the Crown or organisation and the person dealing with the request has no grounds for believing that the information is either held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation, or by a local authority.

Waka Kotahi uses different systems to accomplish different goals (for example, customer feedback and maintenance records are in separate systems and are not linked in an end-to-end manner), and in some instances, insufficient information is received to attribute a compensation claim directly to pothole damage. However, to provide reasonable assistance, 10 complaints were received in the Wellington region in 2022 mentioning 'pothole' or similar, within a national total of 207 – these are separate from the 44 compensation requests for any reason were received in the Wellington region in 2022, within a national total of 796.

*How many [Wellington area] potholes were reported to Waka Kotahi in 2022?*

*How many were fixed?*

*Did any of those potholes need to be fixed multiple times , if so, which ones*

In addition to the 10 complaints referred to above, our contractor maintenance teams regularly monitor roads and identify where pothole repairs are required. Maintenance records provide the number of 'dispatches' to repair potholes and show the general location for the area of road being repaired, but not pothole count or size. As I am unable to answer these questions as phrased, I am refusing them under section 18(g)(i) of the Act. However, I am able to offer some data that may be of assistance to you below.

The following table provides the number of pothole repair dispatches in 2022 for the state highway network, across each district within the Wellington maintenance area. 'Isolated' dispatches are to areas that were not attended again within the 2022 calendar year. 'Repeat' dispatch attendance is identified where the data contains more than one attendance in 2022 in the same location with a 10 metre tolerance applied. Resealing work can usually only be undertaken during summer, and therefore

repeat pothole repairs may be expected to occur during winter while awaiting the next resealing season. The accuracy of this analysis is subject to roading contractors correctly entering data each time a pothole is repaired.


<b>District (for highways)</b>	<b>Isolated</b>	<b>Repeat</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
Carterton District	14	5	19
Horowhenua District	18	2	20
Hutt City	9	3	12
Kapiti Coast District	40	16	56
Masterton District	34	16	50
Porirua City	12	8	20
South Wairarapa District	16	10	26
Upper Hutt City	21	55	76
Wellington City	15	8	23
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>302</b>

Under section 28 of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review my decision to refuse these requests. The contact details for the Ombudsman can be located at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz).

In line with Waka Kotahi policy, this response will be published on our website in approximately one week.

If you would like to discuss this reply with Waka Kotahi, please contact Andy Knackstedt, Senior Manager, Media, by email to [andrew.knackstedt@nzta.govt.nz](mailto:andrew.knackstedt@nzta.govt.nz).

Yours sincerely



**Neil Walker**  
National Manager Maintenance and Operations