

8 February 2024

██████████
████████████████████

REF: OIA-14344

Dear ██████████

Request made under the Official Information Act 1982

Thank you for your email of 20 December 2023 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

- Any rejected personalised plate applications made in the last three years.

To limit this request, please supply the applied for plate number or lettering combination, alongside any reason for refusal.

I request this information from both Waka Kotahi, and your independent contractor, Secondo Investments Limited (trading as "KiwiPlates"), noting that under the OIA 1982, s 2(5), any information held by an independent contractor is deemed to be information held by the agency.

The following document, that contains details of personalised plates declined during 2023, falls within the scope of your request and is enclosed:

- Attachment 1 – Personalised Plate Register – declined 2023.

Details of declined plate applications during 2022 and earlier is contained in a response to a previous similar OIA request and is publicly available on our website. I am therefore required under section 18(d) of the Act to refuse this part of your request as it is publicly available.

The response and related documents, under the title *General number plate series withheld from circulation and allowed/revoked/declined personalised plates*, can be accessed by clicking on "April" under the "2023" heading at <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/about-us/official-information-act/official-information-act-responses/>.

I have also included information that outlines NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) approval protocol regarding personalised plates, including those deemed offensive. This is appended to this letter as Appendix 1.

Under section 28 of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review my decision to refuse part of this request. The contact details for the Ombudsman can be located at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

In line with NZTA policy, this response will soon be published on our website, with personal information removed.

If you would like to discuss this reply with NZTA, please contact us by email to official.correspondence@nzta.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tracy Moore', written over a horizontal line.

Tracy Moore
Head of Customer Operations

Appendix 1

NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi Personalised Plates Approval Protocol

1. Preamble

The NZ Transport Agency (the Transport Agency) has a contract with the personalised plate provider for the marketing and sale of the rights to personalised plates. Legislation provides the provision for the Registrar to not allocate certain combinations of letters, numbers, or both, or any single letter or number that the Registrar considers likely to be offensive to any person or likely to cause confusion. To ensure objectionable and confusing plates are not sold an agreed protocol was developed between the personalised plate provider and the Transport Agency with a view to avoiding the issue of personalised plate combinations that could unnecessarily offend or confuse.

1. Offensive Plates

The criteria applied generally fits within six broad categories – sexual, racial, religious, safety, violence, and derogatory. In addition to this the Transport Agency reviews plate combinations and any associated caption to reduce the risk of offensive plates being manufactured and issued.

The criterion applied currently is that personalised plate legends/messages must not in any way imply a message or meaning that relates to:

1. violence, discrimination or bias based on race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation/notations, or against any individual.
2. any activities or the promotion of substances which are prohibited by law.
3. disturbing the public peace or the maintenance of law and order.
4. any offensive, abusive or derogatory message or meaning negative or derogatory with respect to the program, e.g. alcohol, speed etc.
5. public or well-known figures, including members of the government and other dignitaries.

2. Confusing Plates

The Transport Agency has a commitment to road safety and works closely with the NZ Police who need to have ease of identification of registration plates in an emergency situation.

The Transport Agency and the Police have agreed that to maintain the level of identification of registration plates they would like to limit the number of plates on vehicles that could be easily misread or cause confusion for on road enforcement.

The criteria applied currently is that where any characters are deemed to be intended to confuse or which could prove difficult to distinguish are to be declined. The following guidelines are to be applied:

1. Where a character set has multiple similar characters e.g. 11111 the plate is to be declined.
2. Where a character set is such that it looks correct upside down e.g. MWWMM is to be declined.

Plates with combinations that contain the following letters and number are deemed to cause confusion:

Letters that confuse are H,W,M,N,S,X,I,O,Z.

Numbers that confuse are 0,6,8,9.

3. Where the personalised plate provider has any doubt as to the difficulty in reading a plate, whether the intention is to confuse or not, they will refer the matter to the Transport Agency for a decision before the characters are agreed to.