

50 Victoria Street  
Private Bag 6995  
Wellington 6141  
New Zealand  
T 64 4 894 5400  
F 64 4 894 6100  
www.nzta.govt.nz

17 August 2022



REF: OIA-10555

Dear 

**Request made under the Official Information Act 1982**

Thank you for your email of 18 July 2022 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

*I refer to the following article: [https://times-age.co.nz/war-of-words-is-a-sign-of-the-times/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=war-of-words-is-a-sign-of-the-times](https://times-age.co.nz/war-of-words-is-a-sign-of-the-times/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=war-of-words-is-a-sign-of-the-times)*

*We request all correspondence between the Council and Waka Kotahi concerning the site, and any other sites featuring our beautiful "Stop Three Waters" signage under the LGOIMA.*

*We also request a copy of the original complaint referred to the article, and all subsequent correspondence. Also, provide the precise date, and time of the complaint.*

*We also request information that would answer the following:*

- 1. Did Waka Kotahi do any checks to ensure that the person is not political motivated prior to strong arming the Council?*
- 2. What guidance or policies are in place to protect the importance of political expression on the roading network?*

I have numbered each part of your request and will respond in turn.

- 1. We request all correspondence between the Council and Waka Kotahi concerning the site, and any other sites featuring our beautiful "Stop Three Waters" signage under the LGOIMA.**
- 2. We also request a copy of the original complaint referred to the article, and all subsequent correspondence. Also, provide the precise date, and time of the complaint.**

In response to part one of your request, the email chain titled *Email chain with SWDC* falls within the scope of this part of your request and is enclosed.

In response to part two of your request, the documents titled *Email from the public* and *Photo of sign* fall within the scope of this part of your request and are enclosed. The precise time and date of the complaint are also outlined in the document titled *Email from the public*.

Certain information has been withheld from the documents titled *Email from the public* and *Email chain with SWDC* under the following sections of the Act:

- *Email chain with SWDC:*
  - Personal contact details have been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act to protect the privacy of natural persons.
  - Certain information has been withheld under section (9)(2)(g)(i) of the Act to maintain the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any department or organisation in the course of their duty.
- *Email from the public:* Personal information and contact details have been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act to protect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased natural persons.

**3. We also request information that would answer the following:**

- a) Did Waka Kotahi do any checks to ensure that the person is not political motivated prior to strong arming the Council?**
- b) What guidance or policies are in place to protect the importance of political expression on the roading network?**

In response to part 3(a) of your request, the full information received and passed on to South Wairarapa District Council (SWDC) is contained in documents 1-3 enclosed.

Waka Kotahi staff members did not undertake any checks regarding the motivation, political or otherwise, of the member of the public as this would be highly inappropriate. Waka Kotahi is a New Zealand Crown Entity tasked with promoting a safe and functional land transport system. It is our duty to be both impartial and politically neutral. Political neutrality is a constitutional convention that supports the public's trust in the state sector to work in an impartial way.

We also reject the assertion that we 'strong armed' the local council. As you can see from the correspondence released to you, we passed the correspondence to the council as it is a matter more closely related with its functions. Waka Kotahi sought to understand how the council was treating such instances and did not make a recommendation in relation to the sign; or ask for any action to be undertaken.

You can read more about the legal framework we operate under, how we work with communities, as well as our environmental and social responsibilities, on our website at:  
[www.nzta.govt.nz/about-us](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/about-us).

In response to part 3(b), Waka Kotahi has various pieces of guidance available relating to signage, including:

- the use of signs during General Elections, which is available here:  
[www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/general-election-sign-guidance/General-election-sign-guidance.pdf](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/general-election-sign-guidance/General-election-sign-guidance.pdf)
- guidance for advertising signage alongside the state highway network, which is available at:  
[www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/advertising-sign-alongside-sh/](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/advertising-sign-alongside-sh/)

Under section 28 of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review my decision to withhold parts of this information. 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 soon be published on our website, with personal information removed.

If you would like to discuss this reply with Waka Kotahi, please contact Ministerial Services, by email at [official.correspondence@nzta.govt.nz](mailto:official.correspondence@nzta.govt.nz).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robyn Elston', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Robyn Elston**

National Manager, System Design