

15 November 2023

By email to: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUEST 2023/74

On Tuesday, 17 October 2023 you made a request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA) for the following information:

OIA request - who runs the EC social media accounts and advertising strategy?

OIA request - please send me copies of email, and other communication types, instructions to Returning Officers &/or Electoral Managers regarding engagement with scrutineers in the preliminary count of the 2023 General Election. Please include the generic instructions as well as specific instructions to different electorates.

The Electoral Commission's social media accounts are run by the Communications and Education team. The Commission does not have an "advertising strategy", but our Public Information Strategy is developed by the Communications and Education team in consultation with internal and external stakeholders and providers, including the Commission's advertising and research agencies, and is signed off by the Electoral Commission board.

Voting Services communicate to its field staff through the Voting Services regional update newsletter, called Pānui Pōti. Pānui Pōti is a communication channel to inform field staff on what is required for different phases of delivering the General Election, as well as providing general information in relation to updates and reminders of key actions for field staff.

In the newsletter 38 Pānui Pōti, sent on 10 October 2023, regional field staff were informed about a number of master form updates that were uploaded to the intranet system (ECHO) which included 3 links:

- Scrutineer information for Election Day voting place managers M41-Scrutineer
- Updated Early Count bring for scrutineers M55-ECSCR
- Official Count briefing for scrutineers M80-OCSCR

Another newsletter update, 39 Pānui Pōti, was sent on 12 October 2023 to regional field staff, informing them about scrutineers in both early and official counts.

As part of training to field staff, 'Parties and scrutineers' material was presented in September 2023, and 'Scrutineers' material was presented in October 2023.

One information document on security considerations around scrutineers was provided to Voting Services field staff.

Five chapters of the Electoral Commission's Operations Manual include specific guidance on scrutineers. Voting Services field staff are provided with the Operations Manual.

The Personal Instruction Manual (PIM) for Voting Place Managers also contains guidance on scrutineers.

Further, a phone call between Senior Policy Advisor Benjamin Baker and the Hamilton East Electorate headquarters took place regarding the behaviour of a scrutineer.

The Legal and Policy team sent two emails to Hamilton East Electorate headquarters with guidance on scrutineers, including the statutory requirements for observing the issuing of votes and the early count.

Please find attached the following relevant documents as mentioned above:

1. 38 – Pānui Pōti 10.10.23 - newsletter communication to field staff
2. 39 – Pānui Pōti 12.10.23 - newsletter communication to field staff
3. M41 – Scrutineer – additional information on scrutineers
4. M55 – ECSCR – scrutineer briefing card – rules for early count
5. M80 – OCSCR – scrutineer briefing card – rules for scrutiny of the roll and official count
6. Parties and Scrutineers – September 2023 – training material on parties and scrutineers
7. Scrutineers – Follow-up – October 2023 – training material on rules and guidelines
8. Security considerations around scrutineers
9. Operations Manual Chapter 20 – Delivering Voting Services
10. Operations Manual Chapter 21 – Preparing for Post-Election
11. Operations Manual Chapter 22 – Election Day and Night
12. Operations Manual Chapter 23 – Early Count
13. Operations Manual Chapter 29 – Official Count
14. E3-1 Managing A Voting Place PIM
15. B Baker – phone call file note
16. Legal & Policy team – emails on scrutineer guidance

Additional information on scrutineers can be found in the 2023 Scrutineer Handbook:

<https://elections.nz/guidance-and-rules/candidate-hub/candidate-rules/scrutineers-handbook/>

Parts of the relevant documents are withheld under section 6(c) of the Act where they may prejudice the maintenance of the law and compromise security arrangements at elections.

Some contact details, such as phone numbers, email addresses and some names have been withheld under s 9(2)(a) of the OIA which relates to the privacy of natural persons.

In each case where redactions have been made under section 9(2)(a), consideration has been given to and I am satisfied that the reasons for withholding of the information are not outweighed by other considerations which render it desirable, in the public interest to make that information available.

In the interests of transparency, we release responses to Official Information Act requests every 3 months. We will publish this response with your personal details redacted.

You have the right under section 28(3) of the Act to make a complaint to the Ombudsman if you are not satisfied with the response to your request. Information about how to do this is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by phoning 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Martin Rodgers
Director, Voting Services