

29 April 2022

s 9(2)(a)

By email: s 9(2)(a)
Ref: H202204873

Tēnā koe s 9(2)(a)

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) on 4 May 2022 for information regarding disinterments in the South Canterbury District Health Board (SDHB) region in the past 10 years. I will respond to each part of your request in turn.

How many disinterment applications have been lodged in the past ten years in the South Canterbury District Health Board region?

Where did the disinterments take place in South Canterbury?

How many disinterment applications have been granted in South Canterbury? And where in South Canterbury? How many disinterment applications have been declined in South Canterbury? And where in South Canterbury?

What are the reasons given by the applicant for the disinterment for applications that were granted?

What are the reasons given by the applicant for the disinterment for applications that were declined?

The Ministry has interpreted "South Canterbury" as including the area from south of Ashburton to the Waitaki River (including the McKenzie Country).

Since the beginning of 2012, 10 disinterment applications have been lodged in the area. None were declined. Four were in Timaru and its surrounding area, with the rest in Fairlie, Waimate, Ashburton, Temuka and their respective surrounding areas. The primary reasons given for the applications was for reburial with other family members and reburial closer to family.

How many disinterments have taken place around New Zealand in the past ten years?

Note - We are not requesting the sensitive information of the applicants or their address. Just information on the number disinterments and reasons given by the applicants.

Between 1 January 2012 and 1 April 2022, 421 licences have been issued nationwide. Disinterment licences are not issued with an expiry date as the whānau may take time to organise the exhumation (e.g., allowing family members to gather). Neither the Burial and Cremation Act 1964 nor its supporting regulations requires reports on disinterments and as such the Ministry does not know when the disinterment occurs.

I trust this information fulfils your request. Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D Woodley', with a stylized, cursive script.

Deborah Woodley
Deputy Director-General
Population Health and Prevention