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24 February 2022

s 9(2)(a)

By email: s 9(2)(a)
Ref: H202201150

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 8 February 2022 for information relating to assisted dying and palliative care. I shall respond to each part of your request in turn:

How many FTEs do you have dedicated to palliative care?

The Ministry has no specific FTEs currently dedicated to palliative care.

How many FTEs do you have dedicated to assisted dying?

Six fixed term FTE staff are dedicated to Assisted Dying.

The Assisted Dying team provides the role of the secretariat and a consistent point of contact and for oversight of the service. They serve the person, their whānau, health practitioners involved, and statutory committees listed in the End of Life Choice Act 2019. The secretariat sits within the Regulatory Assurance Team.

The Registrar (assisted dying) is part of the secretariat. Their role is to check that the processes required by the Act have been complied with and must be an employee of the Ministry.

The Ministry is required to provide secretariat support to the Support and Consultation for End of Life New Zealand (SCENZ) group and the Review Committee. The secretariat also includes clinical advisors who provide information and support to help the person and their whānau navigate the steps in the assisted dying service, and provide pastoral support following an assisted death.

Why is there no palliative care national strategy?

The Ministry's palliative care action plan is publicly available on the Ministry's website at: www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/palliative-care-action-plan_0.pdf.

This document was updated in 2017 to be applicable to today's setting. Any advice provided to the Minister by the Ministry on palliative care is currently under active consideration and is therefore refused under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Act, to maintain the constitutional conventions that protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers and officials. I have considered

the countervailing public interest in release in making this decision and consider that it does not outweigh the need to withhold at this time.

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 of Health website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "EP".

Emma Prestidge
Group Manager, Quality Assurance and Safety
Health System Improvement and Innovation