

23 March 2022

§ 9(2)(a)

By email: § 9(2)(a)
Ref: H202203754

Tēnā koe § 9(2)

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 9 March 2022. You asked:

“Can you please advise who instructed the Ministry of Health to feature the use of the Maori language in their advertising as we notice how it’s use has increased. Please also comment on how you expect the advertising to be effective, when the vast majority of European New Zealanders do not speak Maori making the advertising ineffective, confusing and a waste of taxpayers money. Please explain how such advertising featuring the Maori language can reach the target audience, and how do you justify this action to promote the Maori language when Europeans cannot understand the message.”

While the Act allows people to ask Ministers and government departments for information, there is no requirement for agencies to create new information, compile information they do not hold or provide or prove an opinion. The Act does not support requests where statements or opinions are put to an agency for response, couched as a request for official information. Therefore, your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Act on the grounds that information requested is not held by the Ministry and there are no grounds for believing it is held by another agency subject to the Act.

However, I wish to advise you that te reo Māori is an official language of New Zealand. In 1987, Parliament passed the Māori Language Act 1987, which established the Crown entity Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (the Māori Language Commission), which continues under Te Ture mō te Reo Māori 2016 (Māori Language Act 2016) to promote the use of te reo Māori as a living language and as an ordinary means of communication – as do many other organisations, including the Ministry.

People have the right to speak in Māori and it can be used in legal proceedings with interpreters. Māori is also taught in most schools and there are Māori immersion educational facilities. As an official language, its use by the Ministry in advertising material reflects both its status as an official language, and its communication planning to target specific groups of people (e.g., young Māori whose rate of COVID-19 vaccination was lower than the rest of the population) as appropriate.

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/responses-official-information-act-requests.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Turner', written in a cursive style.

Sarah Turner
Deputy Director-General
Office of the Director-General