



Te Kawa Mataaho
Public Service Commission

Official Information Forum 8 June 2022

- *Microphones off please, cameras optional*



Agenda

Housekeeping and welcome

Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission

Handling complex requests

Environmental Protection Authority, Ministry of Defence

Developments with OIA statistics and proactive release

Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission

Close





Environmental
Protection Authority
Te Mana Rauhi Taiao

Assessing large and complex requests under the Official Information Act 1982

8 JUNE 2022

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Well done! You have gathered your information! But now what?



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What makes an OIA request large or complex?

- Sheer volume
- Highly technical information
- Very confidential material that requires careful handling
- Complexity
- Chronology
- Legally complicated
- Challenging or disturbing content
- Several of the above!



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But regardless of the file size...

Assessing information is asking three simple questions:

- Is the information in scope?
- Are there any risks in releasing that information?
- How to mitigate them?



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**We've established
it's large or
complex? How do
we cope?**

**How do you eat
an elephant?**



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Consistency!

- Perhaps the biggest challenge is maintaining consistency while assessing the information.
- A very large and complex request can be a tangled web that take MONTHS to assess.



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Will the information be clear?

- You are now ready to start assessing.
- Is the information going to be understandable?
- A little diversion... does anybody know what this is a photograph of?
- It's the planet Uranus! But that would not be obvious to most people.
- Now ask yourself this: will the information you are assessing be clear to your requestors ?



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The nitty gritty: how to get through it

- Consider combining files so you have one master document
- Record multiple source documents in a table or spreadsheet
- Take notes on who is who and what happens
- Be prepared for game changers and act accordingly
- Don't be afraid to ask for clarification
- Ask for help or have time out if you encounter disturbing content
- Be especially careful with numerical information like phone numbers



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The nitty gritty: how to get through it

- Remember summaries can be appropriate.
- Multi page redactions
- To repeat – or not to repeat – that is the question
- Date your notes each day
- Back up every day
- Go with your gut feeling on what to record
- What to say to the Ombudsman if they come knocking?
- Do some word searches as a final check when you have finished assessing

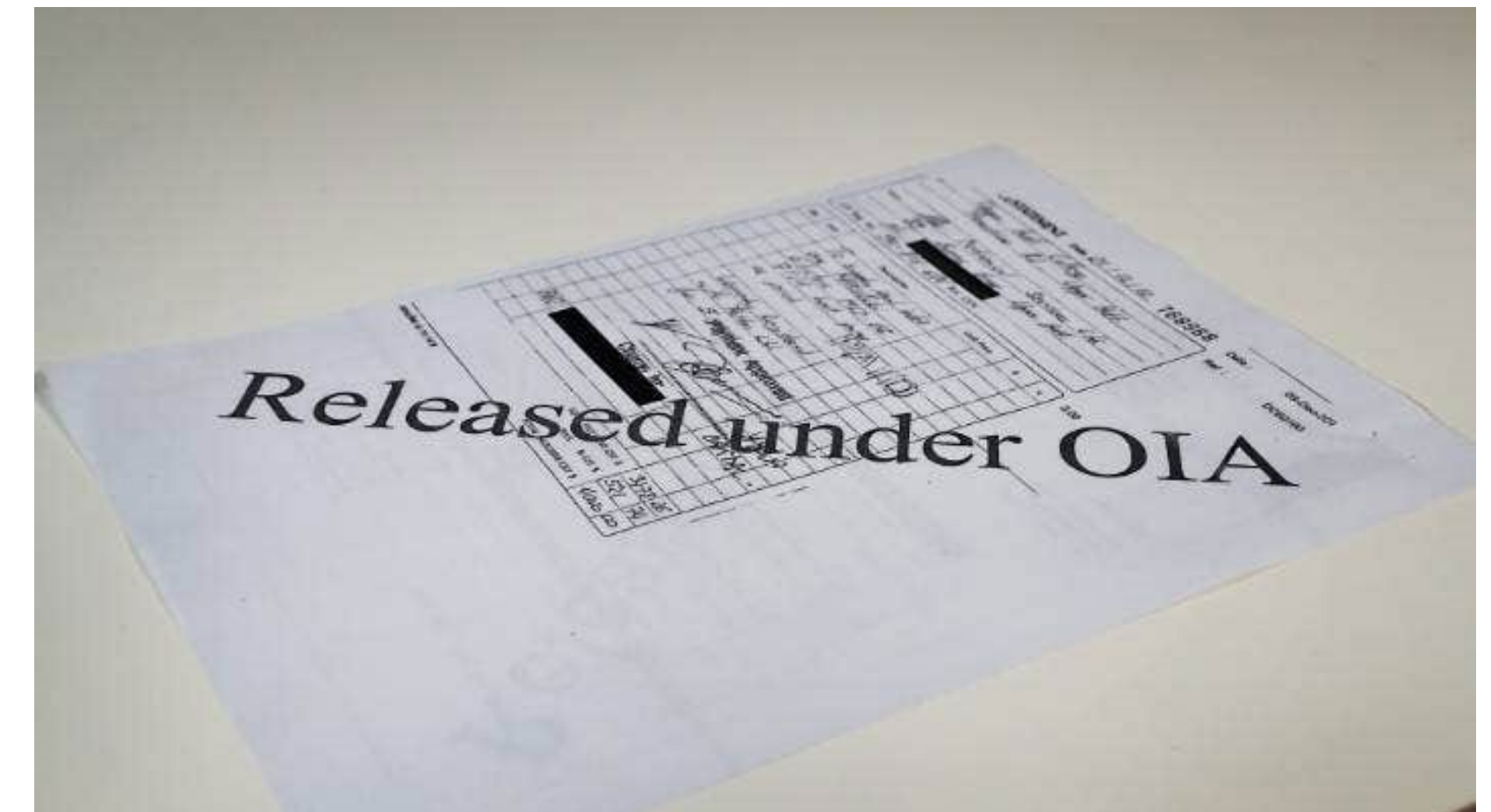


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The home straight

Now you have finished assessing the information, what next?

- Checking, peer review, and sign-out
- Fitting the information into the form it has been requested in
- I've sent it. Now what?
- Congratulations! You've done it!





Handling complex requests

Breaking down a complex request

What is a 'complex' OIA request?

Planning your approach:

- triaging
- scoping
- pulling the information
- peer review
- corresponding with the requestor
- consider the form of the response





Developments with OIA statistics and proactive release

Next Steps in the Public Release of Official Information

Cabinet paper that went through 9 May that intends to:

- Improve reporting on the release of information
- Encourage agencies and Ministers to make more information available proactively
- Ensure information is more searchable and accessible
- Assessing practices relating to the OIA, and progressing commitments under the Open Government Partnership



Improve reporting on the release of information

Include information on proactively released Cabinet materials in the Commission's six-monthly OIA collection

- number of Cabinet papers which have been approved for release by the relevant portfolio Minister
- number of Cabinet papers released

The next OIA data release for the six months to June 2022 will include information on extensions, transfers, refusals & average time to respond



Encourage agencies and Ministers to make more information available proactively

There is an opportunity to expand proactive release to include:

- more release of agency briefings and advice
- the regular release of commonly requested material, such as the titles of briefings and advice
- supporting the assumption of proactive release of OIA responses, working towards publication of OIA responses unless there is a good reason not to



Ensure information is more searchable and accessible

The searchability, functionality and structure of agencies' websites varies greatly

The Commission has created a central hub that provides users with a single point of access to agency proactive release web pages

Work is underway to further develop the hub and improve the searchability and accessibility of released information



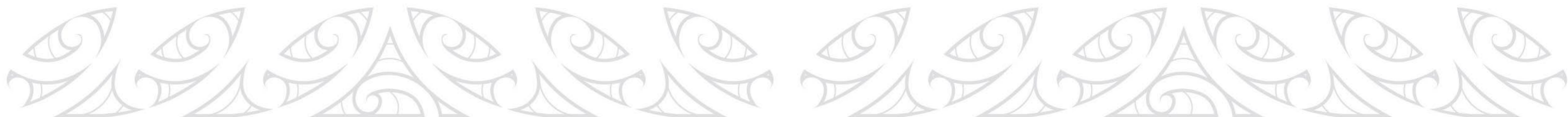
Assessing practices relating to the OIA, and progressing commitments under the OGP

Opportunities to improve agency practices around official information, and initiatives that could improve openness and transparency

An example is the treatment of media enquiries

Guidance for agencies in this space could be useful to ensure flows of information between agencies and the public are not adversely affected

The Commission continues to progress open government work including supporting work under the Open Government Partnership, which may result in further initiatives to increase openness and transparency





Upcoming events

Forum events in 2022

All events for 2022 are on the Forum webpage:

<https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/resources/oia-forum/>

Two more new practitioners' events 2 August and 19 October
co-hosted by the Office of the Ombudsman

These are an introduction to OIA principles, training resources and
networks for those new to this area of work

Next Forum events 12 September and 21 November



Web Standards clinics

Free two hour “drop in” clinics held fortnightly by Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) for anyone delivering digital services with an emphasis on best practice and practical solutions

Attend in person or online

Bring your questions and challenges, general or specific, about:

- web accessibility, and
- how to implement the New Zealand Government Web Standards

<https://www.digital.govt.nz/standards-and-guidance/nz-government-web-standards/web-standards-clinics/>

Contact web.standards@dia.govt.nz



Accessibility Charter training

Free 2-hour workshops on digital accessibility are run by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) in collaboration with DIA and members of the Disabled People Organisations

The purpose is to develop an understanding of why accessibility is integral for engaging effectively and the alternate formats required by disabled people

<https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/accessibility/training/index.html>

Contact accessibility@msd.govt.nz



Here to help

If you need advice or assistance, or have topic for the Forum to consider this year or 2022, please contact Te Kawa Mataaho on OIAForum@publicservice.govt.nz

Check out our online resources:

<http://publicservice.govt.nz/official-information>





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Public Service Commission

Tēna rawa atu koe
Thank you very much

