



12 November 2021

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
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[REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

I refer to your email of 22 September 2021 to the Ministry of Education requesting the following information:

*All advice, analysis, assessments (regardless of whether or not it has been provided to Government Ministers or not) and correspondence with any Minister/Associate Minister of Education and their office regarding the \$44 million allocated to community organisations to provide guidance counselling (referred to here: <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/increased-counselling-support-all-students>) since 31 July 2020 that is not currently in the public domain.*

The Ministry extended the time available for response to 12 November 2021 to enable sufficient time to complete the consultations necessary to make a decision on your request.

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

#### *Guidance counselling by community organisations to primary and secondary students*

As part of a wider Government education wellbeing package, an allocation of \$44 million (over four years) is being, and will be, used to contract local community organisations to provide guidance counselling to both primary and secondary students at selected primary, intermediate, area and secondary schools. It will help students access these services, which are in high demand, especially given the impact of COVID-19.

Contracts to provide counselling services to selected primary, intermediate, area and small secondary schools were signed with seven community organisations in June 2021, following the completion of an RFP process. A further two contracts were signed in July 2021.

The provision of counselling support for selected schools is provided through contracts with community organisations. Contracts with community organisations are based on hourly delivery, in response to demand, rather than on the number of counsellors employed by the organisation.

School delivery plans for face-to-face counselling services are being finalised with contracted community organisations. The design process includes collaborative input from sector peak bodies, counselling bodies, schools and other government agencies, including Ministry of Health, to develop how the service will operate. The completion of these plans enables the

delivery of counselling support to meet the needs of each participating school. The timing to complete these plans has been impacted by COVID-19 Alert Levels.

One provider has already commenced delivery of counselling support.

There is also work underway to stand up a service that can be used to provide virtual counselling services to those distressed children who need it ahead of most students returning to schools at Alert Level 2 and, if necessary, ahead of the completion of the individual school delivery plans.

*Information available as at the time of your request*

Your request, regarding the \$44 million allocated over four years to community organisations to provide guidance counselling, is made up of two parts.

Part 1 seeks all advice, analysis and assessments (regardless of whether or not the item has been provided to Government Ministers or not) since 31 July 2020 not currently in the public domain; while part 2 asks for all correspondence with any Minister/Associate Minister of Education and their office since 31 July 2020.

In undertaking searches for documents and/or correspondence falling within scope of the request, the Ministry set the following parameters:

- papers and documents containing advice, analysis and assessments reviewed and approved from at least Group Manager level up;
- correspondence between senior officials at the Ministry and the Minister's Office; and
- exclusion of letters and emails that are purely administrative in nature.

The details of the documents and correspondence identified as within scope of this request are set out in Appendix A **attached**.

There are 20 items in total. Three are released in full, four are withheld in full, and 13 are attached, subject to appropriate withholding under the Act.

In making decisions around the extent to which information has been provided, the Ministry has relied on one or more of the following reasons to withhold under the Act:

- section 9(2)(a), to protect the privacy of natural persons;
- section 9(2)(b)(ii), to protect the commercial position of the person who supplied the information, or who is the subject of the information;
- section 9(2)(f)(iv), to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials;
- section 9(2)(g)(i), to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any department or organisation in the course of their duty; and
- section 9(2)(j), to enable negotiations (including consultation) to be carried on, without prejudice or disadvantage, to the parties involved.

In each instance, the reason for withholding the information is not outweighed by public interest in its release.

Please note, the Ministry now proactively publishes responses to requests made under the Act on the Ministry's website. As such, this response may be published on the Ministry's website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.

Thank you again for your email. You have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review this decision. You can do this by writing to [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Teddy'.

Sean Teddy  
**Hautū | Deputy Secretary**  
**Te Mahau | Te Pae Aronui**