



18 March 2021



Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your email of 9 February 2021 to the Ministry of Education requesting the following information:

1. *Documents, investigations, studies, memorandums, talking points or similar, prepared by the Ministry on the costs of school uniforms or the ways in which uniforms impact school communities.*
2. *Communications between the Ministry and schools, or within the Ministry, in relation to uniforms. Including (but not limited to) guidance on acceptable supplier arrangements, advice on uniform guidelines, queries from schools about uniforms.*
3. *Any details on discussions within the Ministry about uniforms or the potential for uniform policy on a national level.*

I recognise school uniforms can be a significant cost for some families. As you may be aware, individual school Boards make decisions on uniform requirements, including whether to have a uniform, the type and price. Schools are expected to consult with their communities when making these decisions, and ensure they do everything they can to minimise the cost of uniforms, including not making a significant profit from uniform sales.

We continue to regularly engage with schools both individually and regionally about school uniforms. We are aware of the affects that school uniform pricing has on families, whānau, and communities and continue to ask about ways that schools reduce these affects and share those initiatives with the wider sector.

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). I will answer each of your questions in turn below

Questions One and Three

We have identified three documents in scope of these parts of your request. These have been provided as **Appendix A** to this response.

Late in 2019, research was undertaken to establish if schools are generating excessive profit from uniform trading. **Document one** is a summary of the Ministry's desktop research into school uniform pricing trends, dated 20 July 2020. Part of this research was to investigate New Zealand Guidance and Regulation of School Uniforms. **Document two** contains high level talking points designed for me to provide a verbal summary of the desktop research if needed.

In January 2021, the Ministry undertook a small National inquiry into initiatives undertaken by schools to keep uniform costs low for family and whānau. **Document three** is a summary of this research, as allowable under section 16(1)(e) of the Act.

Question Two

I note your request to be forwarded all *communications between the Ministry and schools, or within the Ministry, in relation to uniforms*. Your request, as currently worded, is very broad and not sufficiently particular to enable the Ministry to provide you with a response under the Act. The Ministry therefore is refusing this part of your request under section 18(f) of the Act. However, I trust the information provided in this response has addressed your queries. We remain happy to assist if you have a more specific request.

We have provided schools with guidance on the types of payments that are permitted, including the expectation that schools should not make significant profits from the sale of school uniforms. The Commerce Commission also provides advice and guidance on how the Commerce Act applies to schools regarding the provision of school supplies, including school uniforms. A copy of the Commerce Commission's Guidance is attached as Appendix D of Document One.

Please note, the Ministry now proactively publishes OIA responses on our website. As such, we may publish this response on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.

Thank you again for your email. If you have further questions please feel free to contact our media team in the first instance at media.team@education.govt.nz. If you are unsatisfied with my response, you have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review it. You can do this by writing to info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Nāku noa, nā



Katrina Casey
Deputy Secretary
Sector Enablement and Support