

6 December 2023

By email to: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUEST 2023/104

On Thursday 9 November 2023 you made a request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA) for the following information:

I want to confirm please that election vote recounts have only ever been done for candidate votes and never before for party vote. Is that correct?

There have been reports of issues with voting at some stations, such as Grey Lynn Primary School, where there were no voting papers for the Mt Albert electorate. People who wanted to vote in the Mt Albert electorate needed to cast a special vote. What is your comment on this?

Can I please have a list on the voting stations in NZ where there were reports (one or more) of issues with voting papers

total number of booths across NZ that ran out of voting papers at any point during the election voting period (October 2, onwards)

A regional breakdown of voting booths that had insufficient voting papers during the election voting period (October 2, onwards)

explanations where possible of the reasons why these voting booths ran out of papers.

if available, estimates of the total number of people the matter of insufficient voting papers affected

total number of reports and complaints [from the public and staff/volunteers at voting booths] relating to insufficient voting papers – or any other administrative issues impacting the public's ability to vote.

Responses to each of your questions are set out below:

1. *I want to confirm please that election vote recounts have only ever been done for candidate votes and never before for party vote. Is that correct?*

This is correct. There has never been an election recount for the party vote.

- 2. There have been reports of issues with voting at some stations, such as Grey Lynn Primary School, where there were no voting papers for the Mt Albert electorate. People who wanted to vote in the Mt Albert electorate needed to cast a special vote. What is your comment on this?*

Grey Lynn Primary school was not used as a voting place in 2023. We assume that you mean the voting place held at Richmond Road School in the Auckland Central electorate, which held ballot papers for neighbouring electorates including Mt Albert. This voting place ran out of Mt Albert ballot papers for about half an hour in the morning, and while they were waiting for supplies, they let Mt Albert voters know the locations of other nearby voting places where they could cast an ordinary vote if they wanted to.

- 3. Can I please have a list on the voting stations in NZ where there were reports (one or more) of issues with voting papers*

No voting places ran out of ordinary ballot papers for their 'home' electorate. Three voting places ran out of ordinary ballot papers for electorates they took shared votes for. These voting stations were Remuera Baptist Church in the Tamaki electorate, Te Hapua in the Banks Peninsula electorate and Richmond Road School in the Auckland Central electorate. In all cases ballot papers were restocked promptly.

- 4. total number of booths across NZ that ran out of voting papers at any point during the election voting period (October 2, onwards)*

Please see the answer above.

- 5. A regional breakdown of voting booths that had insufficient voting papers during the election voting period (October 2, onwards)*

Please see the answer above.

- 6. explanations where possible of the reasons why these voting booths ran out of papers.*

Voting places were well stocked with ballot papers, were monitored continuously, and restocked when needed. Mobile teams were available to resupply in areas where we experienced higher than anticipated demand. Election day was busy, especially as more people took the opportunity to enrol and vote on the day.

We are aware of a small number of instances of voting places temporarily running out of special ballot papers. The electoral legislation anticipates that this can occur and provides a process to enable voting to continue. The Electoral Commission has detailed processes for staff to follow when this happens. You can find these processes in the attached Personal Instruction Manual for Issuing Votes on pages 39-41. Sometimes our staff will suggest nearby voting places where wait times are shorter or where ballot papers may be available.

We will be looking into what improvements can be made as part of our post-election review to ensure that New Zealanders can trust in the integrity of our processes.

7. *if available, estimates of the total number of people the matter of insufficient voting papers affected*

The Commission does not collect this information. Therefore, this part of your request is declined under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act.

8. *total number of reports and complaints [from the public and staff/volunteers at voting booths] relating to insufficient voting papers – or any other administrative issues impacting the public’s ability to vote.*

Please see the response to question 3 regarding reports of insufficient ballot papers at voting booths.

Any formal complaints to the Commission in relation to voters casting votes during the 2023 General Election are managed through our public enquiries process.

The Commission has received 13 complaints from members of the public regarding insufficient number of ballot papers at voting places.

Regarding other administrative issues impacting the public’s availability to vote on election day, as was widely reported at the time, there was an issue with the app used to look up a digital copy of the electoral roll at voting places. The app was not working properly for approximately three hours on election day. The Commission received 8 complaints from members of the public about this.

In the interests of transparency, we release responses to Official Information Act requests every 3 months. We will publish this response with your personal details redacted.

You have the right under section 28(3) of the Act to make a complaint to the Ombudsman if you are not satisfied with the response to your request. Information about how to do this is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by phoning 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Martin Rodgers
Director, Voting Services