

18 December 2023

By email to: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

### **OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUEST 2023/84**

On Monday 23 October 2023 you made a request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA) for the following information:

*...regarding the electronic version of the electoral roll.*

- *All communications and or documents relating to issues or concerns with the online electoral roll going offline or not working PRIOR to election day.*
- *Any questions or answers given to election booth staff on what to do if the electronic roll went down.*
- *Any communications or documents regarding issues with the electronic roll while training election staff.*
- *All communications and documents related to issues with the electronic electoral roll ON election day.*
- *All communications and documents related to issues with the electronic electoral roll AFTER election day.*

#### ***What is the eRoll application?***

The eRoll app is a mobile device application that enables Electoral Commission staff to search the live electoral rolls to check whether voters are enrolled and in which electorate for voters who do not bring their EasyVote card with them. Searching requires the voter's name and month of birth and has a wildcard facility to deal with spelling variants.

It is an administrative device to facilitate roll look-up. It does not affect whether or not a person can enrol or vote. It is an electronic option to do what can also be done by looking up the hard copy rolls in the voting place for electors enrolled by writ day and looking up the Index to Places and Streets to work out which electorate a person lives in.

The eRoll app also allows voters who have moved within an electorate to update their address details electronically at a voting place. It is an electronic way to complete the address update that can also be done through completing an enrolment form.

***All communications and or documents relating to issues or concerns with the online electoral roll going offline or not working PRIOR to election day.***

The online electoral roll (eRoll) is a purpose-built system developed in New Zealand for the exclusive use of the Electoral Commission. The Electoral Commission design, test and manage its development. Software development is performed by a New Zealand company CATALYST.NET LIMITED, NZ Company Number 952897. CATALYST.NET is contracted to the Electoral Commission to help the Electoral Commission maintain eRoll. It is hosted at CATALYST CLOUD, a New Zealand Government approved 'All-of-Government' Cloud provider.

The eRoll system has been used without issue in the 2020 general election, two by-elections and throughout the advanced voting period of the 2023 general election. It was also load tested prior to the 2023 general election.

There were a few other unrelated issues experienced with the eRoll system in August, September and October in the run-up to election day. These were all resolved or identified as user error and not system issues and are unrelated to the incident on election day. Copies of communications related to those issues are included in Appendices 1.1 and 1.2.

In the interests of transparency, we have also attached the communications, work requests and reports related to load testing the performance of eRoll and other applications before the 2023 general election.

These focus on the interactions between the Electoral Commission IT Applications team and CATALYST.NET.

We have carried out the following redactions in the source material:

1. Contact details, such as phone numbers, email addresses and surnames have been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the OIA which relates to the privacy of natural persons. In each case where redactions have been made under section 9(2)(a) I am satisfied that the reasons for withholding of the information are not outweighed by other considerations which render it desirable, in the public interest, to make that information available. The same ground for withholding applies also to redactions within each of the Appendices listed below.
2. Information regarding applications other than eRoll as disclosure of this information is outside the scope of your request.
3. Technical information regarding eRoll (for example IP addresses or hostnames) as disclosure of this information would prejudice the Electoral Commission's ability to prevent and detect cyber security threats and may also result in exposure of the information to those who may use this information for improper gain. This gain or advantage could damage trust and confidence in the electoral system and has been redacted under section 6(c) of the OIA on the ground that making this information available would be likely to prejudice the maintenance of the law, and under section 9(2)(k) of the OIA on the ground that withholding this information is necessary to prevent the disclosure or use of official information for improper gain or improper advantage. Again, in each case where redactions have been made under section 9(2)(k) I am satisfied that

the reasons for withholding of the information are not outweighed by other considerations which render it desirable, in the public interest, to make that information available.

***Any questions or answers given to election booth staff on what to do if the electronic roll went down.***

On Election Day the eRoll server went down, National Support staff raised this with IT and management. Senior staff drafted an e-text. Voting Place staff were informed of the issue via e-text, and were advised to refer to their training manual in managing queues without eRoll and use the manual roll process. Copies of the following have been attached in Appendices 2.1 to 2.7 which include information given to election staff during training and on election day.

- Voter Assistant Training – slide used to tell Voting Place staff where to access information if eRoll stops working.
- Page from Voting Place Personal Instruction Manual – Managing queues without eRoll
- National Support Team – Microsoft Teams chat discussions.
- Email noting eRoll servers down from Voting Services team to IT
- General Election Delivery Taskforce – Microsoft Teams chat discussions.
- Draft e-text message to voting place phones.
- e-text messages. Text messages sent to voting place phones from national office.

***Any communications or documents regarding issues with the electronic roll while training election staff.***

Staff were provided with training in managing queues at voting places without eRoll, as well as troubleshooting enrolment record issues within the app.

The following were given to Voting Place staff during training and are available in Voting Places and copies are attached as Appendices 3.1 and 3.2

- Voter Assistant Personal Instruction Manual – Page 18 is referred to in response to above question.
- E139-VA – Reference document to be placed on table in Voting Place.

***All communications and documents related to issues with the electronic electoral roll ON election day.***

Day to day technical management of eRoll issues on election day was performed by the Senior Manager IT Services with technical staff from EC and CATALYST.NET. All technical activities related to the issues on the day were documented in a work request.

All other communications were managed through the Chief Information Officer. The work request and other communications will be included in Appendix 4.

We are currently carrying out the following redactions in the source material and will provide the documents as soon as we can in the next few days:

1. Information regarding applications other than eRoll as disclosure of this information is outside the scope of your request.
2. Technical information regarding eRoll (for example IP addresses or hostnames) as disclosure of this information would prejudice the Electoral Commission's ability to prevent and detect cyber security threats and may also result in exposure of the information to those who may use this information for improper gain. This gain or advantage could damage trust and confidence in the electoral system and has been redacted under section 6(c) of the OIA on the ground that making this information available would be likely to prejudice the maintenance of the law, and under section 9(2)(k) of the OIA on the ground that withholding this information is necessary to prevent the disclosure or use of official information for improper gain or improper advantage. Again, in each case where redactions have been made under section 9(2)(k) I am satisfied that the reasons for withholding of the information.

***All communications and documents related to issues with the electronic electoral roll AFTER election day***

Post election day investigations into the eRoll issues were carried out by the Senior Manager IT Services and Chief Information Officer at the Electoral Commission. All communications and documents (including an incident report produced with the assistance of CATALYST.NET) and a further performance testing prior to the Port Waikato by-election will be included in Appendix 5.

We are currently carrying out the following redactions in the source material and will provide the documents as soon as we can in the next few days:

1. Information regarding applications other than eRoll as disclosure of this information is outside the scope of your request.
2. Technical information regarding eRoll (for example IP addresses or hostnames) as disclosure of this information would prejudice the Electoral Commission's ability to prevent and detect cyber security threats and may also result in exposure of the information to those who may use this information for improper gain. This gain or advantage could damage trust and confidence in the electoral system and has been redacted under section 6(c) of the OIA on the ground that making this information available would be likely to prejudice the maintenance of the law, and under section 9(2)(k) of the OIA on the ground that withholding this information is necessary to prevent the disclosure or use of official information for improper gain or improper advantage. In each case where redactions have been made under section 9(2)(k) I am satisfied that the reasons for withholding of the information.

***Steps the Electoral Commission has taken in response***

While the system issues were identified and remedied on election day, the Board of the Electoral Commission subsequently requested a full report on the causes and lessons learned in relation to both the performance of the eRoll Application and the management of the incident. The Board has commissioned the following actions to be undertaken:

- a review of the current software development lifecycle to ensure appropriate checks and controls are in place to capture all functional and non-functional requirements, to be completed by end of Q1 2024;
- a review of how load testing of key business applications is delivered in future, including the use of external third party specialist providers to be completed by the end of Q2 2024;
- a review of performance monitoring that is in place across Electoral Commission IT systems including monitoring by our third party providers, to be completed by the end of Q1 2024; and
- further embedding of the major IT incident management process introduced by the Electoral Commission and Catalyst during Q1 2024.

The Electoral Commission will provide an update on this work in its statutory report to the Minister of Justice on the 2023 General Election under section 8 of the Electoral Act 1993 in May 2024. This report will be tabled in Parliament and published on the Electoral Commission's website.

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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by phoning 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Karl Le Quesne  
Chief Electoral Officer