

19 July 2024

By email to: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUEST 2024/45

On 22 June 2024 you made a request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA) for the following information:

I'm writing to request any studies or advice the Electoral Commission has either received or generated for others since 2017 with regard to the security and/or compromisability of online voting as implemented for overseas voters.

New Zealand does not have an online voting system, and we have not received or generated any specific studies about the security of online voting.

For the purposes of this Official Information Act Request, we have assumed your enquiry relates to the digital systems that support overseas voters in casting a vote in New Zealand parliamentary electoral events.

Overseas voters can use electronic systems to access and return their voting papers, after manually completing them. Voters are able to download their voting papers and can either print and mark them by hand or by mark them using an electronic device. Once the voting papers are completed, voters can then scan or photograph them to create an image file or, if completed using an electronic device, save the file which is then uploaded. On receipt of receiving voting papers, they are printed and processed to be counted manually.

The software applications are used to support overseas voting are specifically the download and upload voting papers applications. The Commission has not produced or received specific advice regarding the security of systems that support overseas voting in this way.

We have conducted information security certification and accreditation reviews of these applications prior to the 2023 general election. These risk assessments can involve external contractors who support with specific skills or testing capabilities, however, would not constitute formal advice from these parties.

We are not able to share the results or outcomes of these reviews 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.

Therefore, this part of your request is declined under section 6(c) of the Act 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 Act on the ground that withholding this information is necessary to prevent the disclosure or use of official information for improper gain or improper advantage.

We advise voters uploading their voting papers to be aware of the machines and networks they are using, as we are not able to confirm those are secure, and to ensure that they remove any copies of the voting paper images. We also inform them of alternative means (such as voting in person or requesting a postal vote from an overseas voting place) should they not wish to use these electronic systems.

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