

27 January 2025

By email to: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

### OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUEST 2024/75

On Friday, 6 December 2024 you made a request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA) for the following information:

*I was just going over the transcript of the chief electoral officers appearance before the Justice select committee this week.*

*He said that once the relationship between the marae and candidate was understood, the Commission developed a mitigation plan.*

*Has that been released anywhere publicly (that I've missed)? And if not, may I please request a copy?*

The comment at select committee was a reference to the arrangements made with the Marae, which were noted in the Report on the General Election. Before agreeing to use the venue, we secured agreement the candidate would not enter the voting place other than to vote. We were provided with an alternative designated contact person and ensured marae staff were aware of the rules regarding election advertising.

For transparency and completeness, we are providing the following documents, many of which you will already have. Our mitigation plan was not in the form of a single written document. Rather it consisted of:

1. Meetings between the Electoral Commission and representatives from Manurewa Marae and/or Te Pae Herenga o Tāmaki, where requirements around the activities at the voting place and the participation of the candidate were agreed. Copies of meeting notes are attached.
2. Voting place assessments, information sheets and agreements.
  - a. It is part of the Commission's process to have a formal agreement or commitment in place for the use of a venue as a voting place. This could take the form of either the

venue's own hire agreement or the Commission's licence to occupy, which is typically used when the venue does not have its own agreement. It has not always been possible to complete a signed agreement so in some cases alternative means of confirming the use of a venue are accepted, e.g. an invoice from the hirer. In the case of Manurewa Marae, the licence to occupy was sent to the Marae but was not returned. However, there were verbal discussions and agreements about the requirements for voting places, including for political neutrality, and assurances given. This was followed up several times (as detailed in the timeline in Attachment 2.1). We note that the meeting notes provided above are summarised in this timeline. We have also attached a letter confirming the use of Manurewa Marae as a voting place for the 2023 General Election.

- b. As part of the Commission's process, the attached information sheet (M42-VPINFO) is to be provided to the venue at the time of the initial assessment. You will note that this contains information and requirements related to political neutrality.
  - c. The attached voting place assessment, M41-VPAssess, confirms political neutrality.
- 3. Staff recruitment - all staff are required to complete and sign a Declaration of Conflicts of Interest form prior to appointment. A copy of the form is attached for your information.
- 4. Training of Voting Place Managers - after the standard prescribed training modules were delivered by the electorate trainers, the Electorate Manager for the Manurewa and Tamaki Makaurau electorates conducted a 15 to 30 minute briefing. to all Voting Place Managers in the two electorates. The briefing covered topics such as key contacts at electorate headquarters, security matters, logistical matters, venue access, the escalation process, staff management, and the pack-up and return of supplies.
- 5. Communication and Reporting - Voting Services Manager, Mobile Support (with 3 to 4 visits a day) and Voting Place Manager were required, for the duration of the election period, to complete a reporting form to capture the events of the day. These are physical forms and have been securely destroyed as part of the Close of HQ procedure.
- 6. Issues management - an escalation process is in place across all electorates where sensitive matters are brought to the attention of the Electorate Manager directly to be dealt with on an urgent basis – this includes issues identified by staff at the voting place, and from external people through channels managed at the Commission's national office.

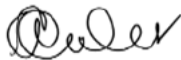
Essentially, the mitigation plan was a combination of our existing systems, instructions and processes, which have been designed to address political neutrality and other issues with the conduct of voting places.

Some contact details, such as phone numbers, email addresses and some names have been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the OIA which relates to the privacy of natural persons. Parts of the documents are also withheld under section 6(a) of the Act where they may compromise security arrangements at elections. In each case where redactions have been made under section 9(2)(a), consideration has been given to and 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.

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



Anusha Guler  
Chief Executive Officer (acting)