

24 September 2020

[REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 27 August 2020 to Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki), requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

- *I would like to know how many of your staff who are managing and assessing requests made under the Privacy and Official Information Acts for information held on Oranga Tamariki client files, are working from home at the moment and how many days in a week are they working from home.*
- *Since the information that they are accessing are sensitive and subject to the Privacy Act, how do you ensure that these information are being handled well. What are the measures you have put in place to ensure that those who are working from home, especially from the privacy assessor team, are upholding your clients' privacy.*
- *Do you think it is a good practice to have these information accessible outside the office?*

Our Customer Information Requests (CIR) team is in charge of responding to requests for personal information, under the Privacy Act 1993 and Official Information Act 1982. On 12 August 2020, Auckland was moved into Alert Level 3, and the rest of New Zealand moved to Alert Level 2. Since this shift in alert levels, the majority of staff in CIR – approximately 100 people – have been working from home, as per Ministry of Health guidance. Staff members will work in the office when required to do so, for example, to access paper files and print documents that will remain in the building.

Staff from CIR are required to maintain a secure home office environment in order to protect client information. Any new staff recruited are asked to confirm

they have a secure working environment before they start. If individual circumstances do not provide an appropriate environment at home to maintain a client's privacy, then that employee will remain working in the office, as long as it is safe to do so. Only electronic client information is accessed at home, using secure laptops with automated time-initiated screensaver locks. Each laptop is locked to an individual Oranga Tamariki employee and requires their fingerprint in order to unlock. The laptop is closed and stored away when not in use. Physical documents and paper files do not leave the office.

All CIR staff have been coached regarding their obligations around handling client information under the Oranga Tamariki Code of Conduct. The expectations on staff upholding their client's privacy are even higher, and communicated regularly, when working from home. Oranga Tamariki also has a 'Working from Home Guide' available on our intranet, which provides advice and tips on keeping information safe and cybersecurity when at home.

The COVID-19 pandemic has required us to adapt and change how we work, to ensure that we can continue to provide our core services. Our CIR team receive and process hundreds of requests for information every week. By having a digital workplace that allows staff to work remotely from home, CIR is able to continue to assess and release information to clients, regardless of alert level. We are not aware of any instances where a client's privacy has not been upheld due to staff working from home. The majority of CIR staff will continue working from home until there is a change to Alert Level 1.

Oranga Tamariki intends to make the information contained in this letter available to the wider public shortly. We will do this by publishing this letter on our website. Your personal details will be deleted, and we will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@ot.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response, you have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review this decision. Information about this is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by contacting them on 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Steve Groom

General Manager Public, Ministerial and Executive Services