



21 November 2024

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request made under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), received on 8 November 2024. You requested the following (numbered in parts for ease of response):

- 1. Copies of all documented evidence on which Peter Mersi based his assertion in a news conference on Tuesday this week that the Taxpayers' Union and media had engaged in a concerted campaign about IRD's custom audience social media marketing, that included some misrepresentation of information, as it pertains to RNZ (i.e. not if it pertains only to the Taxpayers' Union);*
- 2. Re OIA response 24-572 that shows an email IRD sent on Sept 10 (that begins, Tuesday, September 10, 2024 10:17 AM To: Claire Baillie Claire.Baillie@mpi.govt.nz; 'shaun.jones@acc.co.nz etc) to scores of public agencies, and re the question posed in it, 'Do any of your teams use custom audiences?' – pls advise pls advise the number of agencies that responded, the number that responded to say they do not, and the number that responded to say they do. Re this latter group, if possible pls identity each agency/dept etc said they do.*
- 3. Copies of any and all communications other than purely admin comms, that arose from the sending of the Sept 10 email above, including any and all between IRD and any of those other agencies, and internally between parties at IRD.*

Part 1: Context of statements about a concerted campaign

Inland Revenue recognises the importance of building and maintaining public trust as a cornerstone of an effective tax and social policy system. We value the role of media in fostering public understanding and accountability and we respect their professionalism and integrity.

The Commissioner's statements during the media interview of 5 November 2024 reflect his observations on public concerns generated by extensive media reporting on Inland Revenue's use of hashing and custom audience lists. The breadth of reporting and journalistic investigation demonstrated the legitimate public interest in this issue.

The Commissioner's remarks acknowledged this, and that the nature of some of the social media posts by the Taxpayers' Union had led to potential misunderstandings around Inland Revenue's data security practices. For example, there were public claims of data being "leaked" and that Inland Revenue had "lied" about this. Some of these comments were reported in mainstream media.

The Commissioner's remarks were intended as a general observation of the nature of the information being put out in the public domain influencing public opinion, and not as an assertion of a concerted misrepresentation campaign as it pertains to RNZ. Therefore, your request for copies of documented evidence as it pertains specifically to RNZ is refused under section 18(e) of the OIA as the information does not exist.

Part 2: Number of agencies who responded to the email

Ten agencies responded to the email of 10 September 2024, mostly to acknowledge receipt of it. Three agencies responded that they do not use custom audience lists, and none responded that they do. As no agencies advised that they use custom audience lists, your request for the identity of each agency or department who responded that they use custom audience lists is refused under section 18(e) of the OIA as the information does not exist.

Part 3: Email correspondence relating to the email to other agencies

We have identified 10 emails in scope of your request as outlined in Table 1 below and attached as **Appendix A**. I am releasing the 10 emails to you in part, with some contact information withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the OIA, to protect the privacy of natural persons.

Table 1: Emails released as per Appendix A

Item	Date	Document	Decision
1.	10/09/2024	Custom audiences OIA	Partially released
2.	10/09/2024	RE: Custom audiences OIA	Partially released
3.	10/09/2024	RE: Custom audiences OIA	Partially released
4.	10/09/2024	RE: Custom audiences OIA	Partially released
5.	10/09/2024	RE: Custom audiences OIA	Partially released
6.	10/09/2024	RE: Custom audiences OIA	Partially released
7.	10/09/2024	RE: Custom audiences OIA	Partially released
8.	11/09/2024	RE: Custom audiences OIA	Partially released
9.	11/09/2024	RE: Custom audiences OIA	Partially released
10.	21/10/2024	RE: Custom audiences OIA	Partially released

Right of review

If you disagree with my decision on your OIA request, you can ask an Inland Revenue review officer to review my decision. To ask for an internal review, please email the Commissioner of Inland Revenue at: commissionerscorrespondence@ird.govt.nz.

Alternatively, under section 28(3) of the OIA, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision. You can contact the office of the Ombudsman by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz.

If you choose to have an internal review, you can still ask the Ombudsman for a review.

Publishing of OIA response

We intend to publish our response to your request on Inland Revenue's website (ird.govt.nz) as this information may be of interest to other members of the public. This letter, with your personal details removed, may be published in its entirety. Publishing responses increases the availability of information to the public and is consistent with the OIA's purpose of enabling more effective participation in the making and administration of laws and policies and promoting the accountability of officials.

Thank you again for your request.

Yours sincerely



Pip Knight
Service Leader, Marketing & Communications