

28 February 2020

195 Lambton Quay  
Private Bag 18-901  
Wellington 6160  
New Zealand

T +64 4 439 8000  
F +64 4 472 9596

Personal details removed for proactive release

I refer to your email of 18 December 2019 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

*"I am currently undertaking my Master of Public Management through Victoria University and am researching digital translation across government.*

*Can I please request information about digital translation in your organisation, under the Official Information Act? I am happy to discuss, rescope or stage the response. It would be great to get a sense for how your organisation engages with people who do not have English as a first language.*

*Specifically;*

- 1. Are any parts or teams within your organisation required to translate any content (digitally or in hard copy, or interpreting in person)? If so, where do these requirements originate?*
- 2. Which parts or teams translate content for external, digital channels? Including, static webpages, digital publications, information campaigns, social media, multimedia, emails etc.*
- 3. Are there any guidance, policies, processes or documents on how to translate? Including any project plans, technical specifications and review processes?*
- 4. What is the organisation doing to specifically encourage Te Reo translation?*
- 5. How is the content translated? What is the process for selecting languages? Who translates the material?*
- 6. Are there any future plans to increase translated materials? Who would approve this?"*

On 7 February 2020 we wrote to you to advise that the timeframe for our response would be extended to 28 February 2020. This was because consultations necessary to make a decision on the request were such that we could not make a proper response within the original timeframe (section 15A(1)(b) of the OIA refers). This consultation took longer than expected due to limited staff availability over the Christmas holiday period and relevant staff needing to respond to recent developments overseas.

We have interpreted your request to relate to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (the Ministry's) requirements to translate content for external, digital channels.

Based on this interpretation, we have responded to each of your queries in turn below.

For part 1, I am advised that no parts or teams within the Ministry are required to translate any content. The Ministry's Communications Division (CMD) decides to do this occasionally and on an *ad hoc* basis (e.g. for the Ministry's social media response to the Christchurch attack).

Translation work may also be done by staff based in the Ministry's offshore offices (i.e. Posts) for official purposes and for public diplomacy. For example, the Ministry's locally employed staff (LES) at Posts often provide two-way translation services for written documents, as well as providing interpretation services at a range of official and unofficial meetings and functions involving the Head of Mission and other staff, Ministers and officials.

Another example would be if a treaty is to be concluded in a language other than English. It is important to make sure we are signing an accurate foreign language text, as typically the actual translation is done by the other party. In these cases, the Ministry gets the text verified against the English text by the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) Translation Service.

For part 2, I am advised that CMD does not translate content on a regular basis and has no specific capability to do so. There is some translated content on the Ministry's external website, which is organised by the Ministry's regional divisions and Posts.

For part 3, the Ministry does not have any specific guidance, policies, processes or documents on how to translate, including any project plans, technical specifications and review processes.

For part 4, the Ministry does not have any specific guidance, policies, processes or documents to specifically encourage Te Reo translation.

For part 5, I am advised that for the translated content during the response to the Christchurch attack, CMD drew on the expertise of Ministry staff with language capability and the translation services provided by DIA.

For part 6, I am advised that the Ministry does not have any specific future plans to increase translated materials.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details redacted) and enclosed documents may be published on the Ministry's website.

You have the right under section 28(3) of the OIA to seek a review of this response by the Ombudsman.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'W' followed by a long horizontal line.

Wendy Adams  
for Acting Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade