



## Media statement

### **Ombudsman confirms Callaghan Innovation investigation**

24 October 2018

The Chief Ombudsman Peter Boshier has confirmed he will conduct an investigation into the way Callaghan Innovation administers its Official Information Act requests.

Mr Boshier says he has decided to announce an inquiry following claims from the Taxpayers Union that it has used fictitious identities to make Official Information Act requests because Callaghan Innovation has given its queries lower priority.

The inquiry will be included in his current round of Official Information Practice Investigations.

“The freedom provided under the Official Information Act is one of the reasons New Zealand is considered one of the most open and transparent countries in the world. My job is to make sure the Act is working as it should.”

“I am conducting this investigation under the Ombudsmen Act which allows me to initiate inquiries into the administrative conduct of public agencies like Callaghan Innovation.”

“I don’t have any formal powers to investigate the conduct of requestors. However, I feel strongly that both requestors and agencies need to follow the spirit as well as the letter of the law.”

“The use of fictitious names by requestors isn’t unlawful but I believe they need to be up front about who they are unless they have good reason to keep their identities secret.”

“Agencies must also make sure the identity of the requester doesn’t have an impact on the timing or substance of its decision making.”

Mr Boshier says the interaction between the Taxpayers Union and Callaghan Innovation is just part of a broader investigation into the agency’s OIA practices.

“I have a role in making sure agencies overall have robust systems in place for dealing with OIA requests.”

“This inquiry is one of eight self-initiated investigations into OIA practice I will conduct across the public sector this financial year.”

“The aim is to establish whether the agencies have the leadership, culture, systems, policies and procedures in place to support good official information administration and to suggest improvements.”

Mr Boshier says he expects the inquiry into Callaghan Innovation will be completed next year.

“We do a very thorough job of these investigations. We survey both the agency as well as members of the public including requestors. We also conduct one on one interviews with relevant staff.”

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