

## Request for recruitment consultant expenditure

<b>Legislation</b>	Official Information Act 1982, s 18(f)
<b>Agency</b>	Department of Corrections
<b>Ombudsman</b>	Beverley Wakem
<b>Case number(s)</b>	177216
<b>Date</b>	September 2008

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*No cost code specifically and solely for recruitment fees—information could not be made available without ‘substantial collation or research’—release of other information resolved the complaint*

A requester sent requests to a number of agencies seeking the amount spent on recruitment consultants each year from 1999/2000 to 2006/2007, broken down by the name of the consultant and the number of vacant positions worked to fill. Some requests were refused on the grounds of substantial collation or research; others on the basis that the information did not exist (section 18(e) OIA).

The difficulty involved in finding and collating the requested information was that none of the agencies had a cost code specifically and solely for recruitment fees. Information about such fees was contained within more general, often multiple, cost categories. The agencies would have needed to review thousands of lines of expenditure, and in many cases, check the individual invoices (many of which were stored off-site) to see whether they related to recruitment fees. The Police estimated it would take a full time person 4 to 6 weeks to collate the information. The Department of Corrections estimated it would require 96 working days to provide the requested information in relation to prisons only. Statistics New Zealand estimated it would entail at least 140 hours work.

The Chief Ombudsman accepted that the amount of work involved would have a significant impact on the effective operation of the agencies, and the information could not be made

available without *'substantial collation or research'*. However, she was able to resolve the complaints through the release of other information.

All the agencies agreed to provide the information already compiled for relevant select committees on contractors and consultants, along with a caveat about what this information did/did not include. In addition, the agencies provided information that could be easily extracted from their financial systems.

The Ministry of Justice provided the total amount spent on the *'staff recruitment and advertising'* costs category for each year of the request and a print out of all the costs recorded in this category. The New Zealand Police provided amounts paid to specific vendors under the *'recruitment general'* category since this information began to be recorded in 2004. Housing New Zealand Corporation offered to identify the expenditure on recruitment agencies from within the select committee information and provide an explanation of what these costs were likely to cover. It also provided the total expenditure listed under each of the potentially relevant cost codes for each financial year.

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