

Request for contact details of Housing New Zealand staff

Legislation	Official Information Act 1982, s 9(2)(g)(ii)
Agency	Housing New Zealand
Ombudsman	Peter Boshier
Case number(s)	484534
Date	24 January 2019

Section 9(2)(g)(ii) OIA applied—there was a strong likelihood that staff would be subjected to further harassment or improper pressure if the requester obtained their contact details—this conduct could detrimentally affect staff thus impairing HNZ’s ability to do its job

A tenant asked Housing New Zealand (HNZ) for the names, titles, and contact details of staff involved in making decisions about his garden. HNZ released the names and titles, but withheld the contact details under section 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA. The requester complained to the Ombudsman.

Section 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA applies if withholding is ‘*necessary to ... maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through ... the protection of [Ministers, members, officers or employees of agencies] from improper pressure or harassment*’.

HNZ provided copies of some correspondence and records of interactions with the requester going back three years. It was clear from this that the requester had engaged in aggressive, threatening, and abusive behaviour toward HNZ staff and contractors on a number of occasions, some of which necessitated Police involvement.

The Ombudsman commented that the requester’s previous behaviour met the threshold for improper pressure or harassment. There was a strong likelihood that staff would be subjected to further harassment or improper pressure if the requester obtained their contact details. This conduct could detrimentally affect staff thus impairing HNZ’s ability to do its job.

There was little public interest in release of the information. The requester knew the names of the staff involved in making the decisions. He also had the ability to raise concerns about his tenancy with the appropriate contact person. The public interest in release did not outweigh the harm that would be caused to the effective conduct of public affairs.

After considering the Ombudsman's comments, the requester decided to withdraw his complaint.

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