

Request for draft internal review of International Visitor Survey

Legislation	Official Information Act 1982, 9(2)(g)(i)
Agency	Statistics New Zealand
Ombudsman	Leo Donnelly
Case number(s)	463895
Date	January 2018

Internal review still in draft form—redacted comments comprised preliminary views of individual within agency—s 9(2)(g)(i) applied—no overriding public interest in disclosure

A requester sought an internal review of the International Visitor Survey. Statistics New Zealand released the review, with some redactions under section 9(2)(g)(i). The requester complained to the Ombudsman.

Statistics New Zealand explained that the review was still in draft form, and quality assurance processes had not yet been carried out. The redactions were an individual's conclusions formed prior to consultation and final analysis. Release would affect the willingness of others to commit such conclusions to writing in future, which would undermine the agency's ability to carry out its work effectively.

The Ombudsman confirmed the draft nature of the review, and that the redacted comments comprised the preliminary views of an individual within the agency, and were not subject to scrutiny prior to the request. He was satisfied that release of this information would be likely to prejudice the willingness and ability of staff to generate and express free and frank opinions on the review. Any reluctance by staff to express their preliminary views in documents such as this would prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs.

The Ombudsman could not identify anything in the preliminary comments that gave rise to an overriding public interest in disclosure, and concluded that the balance of the public interest lay in facilitating the development of a robust review. He formed the opinion that section 9(2)(g)(i) provided good reason for the redactions.

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