



Level 2
119 Ghuznee Street
P O Box 9744
Wellington 6141
New Zealand

info@nzonair.govt.nz
www.nzonair.govt.nz

Tel: 04 382 9524
Fax: 04 382 9546

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Tēnā koe [redacted]

Official Information request and response

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act ("OIA") dated 29 July 2023.

You have requested:

1. *The application made by Hayden Donnell to write an article for the Metro Magazine (Published Title: Cycleway Saboteurs)*
2. *The Assessors assigned to Hayden Donnell's application ?*
3. *All notes, emails, txts or voice conversations between Hayden Donnell and the assessor/s, Head of Journalism PIJF and the Board of PIJF*
4. *Please provide the document confirming Henry Oliver (editorial contributor to Metro Magazine) support for the article (Published Title: Cycleway Saboteurs)*
5. *Please confirm that the Metro Magazine was the original /only primary distribution platform.*
6. *Please provide all notes, letters, emails, txts or voice conversations between representatives of Metro Magazine including the editor and the assessor/s or any representatives of PIJF or NZ on Air*
7. *Please include all notes, letters, emails, txts or voice conversations with anyone from the Ministry of Heritage and Culture (MHC) involved*
8. *Please outline how this article meets Public Interest Journalism eligibility criteria?*
9. *Did the assessor/s seek clarification from the author Hayden Donnell as to the bias of the content?*
10. *Please list the members of the Assessment Panel who reviewed this application?*
11. *Please include all notes, letters, emails, txts or voice conversations recorded by the assessment panel on this application.*
12. *Did anyone involved in the process of approving this application including the Assessor, Assessment Panel, members of the NZ on Air investment Committee or the Board of the PIJF question the application?*

13. *Was the application from Hayden Donnell for a single article or part of a series ?*
14. *Was PIJF, NZ on Air, MCU aware that Lisa Prager had refused to be interviewed by Hayden Donnell ?*
15. *Was Lisa Prager's name mentioned in the application and / or was any supporting documents provided with the application?*
16. *How much money did the applicant request to write this article and how much did the applicant receive?*
17. *Please provide all notes, letters, letters of support, emails, txts or voice conversations from any third parties not already mentioned in this request supporting Hayden Donnell's application.*

Please see our response below:

1. NZ On Air did not receive an application from Mr Donnell. An application (for a project entitled "Who Owns Auckland") was made by Metro Media Group ("Metro"). The article your request concerns did not form part of the original funding application submitted by Metro.

From time to time, contracted content outcomes of NZ On Air funded projects (both those funded through the Public Interest Journalism Fund and those via general funding) may be varied by way of agreement between the funding recipient and NZ On Air, usually through the Head of Funding or Head of Journalism.

NZ On Air's Head of Journalism emailed Henry Oliver from Metro on 5 April 2023 confirming the proposal of a story entitled 'Bike Lane Wars', as an investigative story in replacement of one of the originally intended "Who Owns Auckland" stories.

Please find attached a copy of that correspondence. We have decided to withhold some information contained in this correspondence under Section 9(2)(a) and Section 9(2)(b)(ii) of the OIA.

As noted in that correspondence, a phone call took place between the Editor of Metro and the Head of Journalism at NZ On Air in early March. No formal minutes or notes of this phone conversation exist however we believe the attached correspondence provides a reasonable summary of what was discussed during that phone call.

2. The original decision to fund the 'Who Owns Auckland' project was made by our Staff Investment Committee based on recommendations made by PIJF assessment panel.

However, as noted at paragraph 1 of this response, the decision to allow Metro to commission this particular article as a replacement for one of the "Who Owns Auckland" stories was made by NZ On Air's Head of Journalism.

3. No staff or board member of NZ On Air or any external assessors for the PIJF have had any contact with Mr Donnell. We decline this part of your request under Section 18(g) of the OIA.

4. Please refer to our answer at Paragraph 1.

5. NZ On Air can confirm that Metro Media Group were the original primary distribution however Metro are not prevented from licensing or providing this content to other publishers.

6. Please refer to our answer at Paragraph 1.

In addition to that, please find attached correspondence between the Editor of Metro and Business Affairs staff from NZ On Air as it relates to the initiation and signing of the original “Who Owns Auckland” contract.

7. There are no such communications with the Ministry for Culture and Heritage in respect of this application. We decline this part of your request under Section 18(g) of the OIA.

8. This is a request for comment and falls outside of the Official Information Act.

9. NZ On Air did not seek clarification from Metro or Mr Donnell as to the content of the article your request concerns. NZ On Air does not have any oversight or involvement in the editorial decisions of successful funding applicants. NZ On Air is specifically prohibited from making any editorial directions so under Section 42 of the Broadcasting Act.

NZ On Air recommends that should you have any concerns about issues of bias in this article that you pursue complaint options through the NZ Media Council.

10. As noted above, the article your request concerns was approved by the NZ On Air Head of Journalism as a variation to the output of an approved contract/application. Given this was a change to an existing application, there were no notes recorded by the assessment panel in respect of this article. The PIJF Assessment Panel did not directly assess this proposal.

11. Please refer to our answer at Paragraph 10.

12. Please refer to our answer at Paragraph 10.

13. Please refer to our answer at Paragraph 9.

14. Please refer to our answer at Paragraph 9.

15. No, Lisa Prager’s name was not mentioned.

16. NZ On Air has decided to withhold information identifying the exact costs that went into the creation of the article your request concerns information under Section 9(2)(b)(ii) of the OIA.

As clarified above, the applicant for this application is Metro Media Group. The total funding figure for this application is publicly available information on our website.

17. We decline this part of your request under Section 18(e) of the OIA.

For your information, funding provided by NZ On Air for all successful projects is [searchable](#) on our website. You can also [sign up](#) to receive our regular industry newsletter via our website.

You have the right to refer this response to the Ombudsman if you are dissatisfied with it. More information on how to do this is [here](#). NZ On Air proactively releases information in accordance with the Government's commitment to the Open Government Partnership National Action Plan. This includes publishing responses to requests for information under the OIA. Please note that this response (with your name removed) will be published on the NZ On Air website shortly and will remain on our website for 12 months.

Thank you for your interest in our work.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sharon Kerry', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sharon Kerry
HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES