



19 May 2021

Jamie Huntley  
[fyi-request-15165-8d995ff6@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-15165-8d995ff6@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Tēnā koe Jamie

Thank you for your email of 13 April 2021 to the Ministry of Education requesting the following information:

- *I am requesting copys of ANY and ALL correspondence between the Ministry of Education & Primary, Intermediate and Secondary Schools regarding the Euthanasia Bill & Cannabis Bill referendums in the 2020 election.*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

As the two referendums were not strictly a party-political matter, along with the general public, schools were free to express their views or opinions on these important social issues.

We have identified two emails between the Ministry and King's High School regarding the cannabis referendum, these are attached as **Appendix A**. Some information has been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons.

The only other recorded correspondence between the Ministry and primary, intermediate and secondary schools was a special edition of the regular Ministry Bulletin for School Leaders – He Pitopito Kōrero. This was released on 10 September 2020 and contained a reminder that schools must remain politically neutral during the General Election 2020. However, it does acknowledge that at times there will be grey areas where school boards will need to exercise their judgement. As mentioned above, the referendums fell within this grey area as even though they were running concurrently to the General Election, they were ultimately a wider social issue, not a political matter.

This special edition of the school bulletin can be accessed at the link below:

<https://mailchi.mp/education/covid-19-update-10-september>

We have also published clear requirements that schools must remain politically neutral if they choose to setup a billboard on school grounds, these can be viewed at the below link:

<https://www.education.govt.nz/school/property-and-transport/school-facilities/billboards-on-school-grounds/>.

These requirements are based on the Public Service Commission's guidance on political neutrality. These can be found at the following link:

[Political Neutrality Guidance | Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)

Our regional staff members engage with schools and the community on a regular basis. There may have been times in day to day conversations where our staff spoke to schools about either or both referendums but this would not have been formally recorded. This is because some conversations we have with schools are on an informal basis, where formal notes are not recorded.

Please note, the Ministry now publishes OIA responses on our website. As such, we may publish this response on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.

Thank you again for your email. You have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review this decision. You can do this by writing to [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Nāku noa, nā



Katrina Casey  
**Deputy Secretary**  
**Sector Enablement and Support**

## Document Table - Emails

Email Number	Email Date	To	From	Email Subject	Decision on release
1	24 August 2020	Richard Wingham	Karyn Fielding	Previous news article about the cannabis referendum	<b>Release in part.</b> Information has been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act.
2	26 August	Nick Mclvor, Richard Wingham	Karyn Fielding	MOE Media Response	<b>Release in part.</b> Information has been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act.