

David Dahya

[fyi-request-17520-b37bd9de@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-17520-b37bd9de@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Dear Mr Dahya

Thank you for your request of 16 November 2021, made through the FYI website under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), about Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities removing trees from its property at 193 Mungavin Avenue, Porirua.

Your questions cover a number of broad and overlapping areas. As such, I have interpreted your request as requiring information about two main matters; the approach to tenant welfare taken by Kāinga Ora, and the removal of trees at our property.

I have discussed your request with the local team and would first like to apologise that Kāinga Ora did not respond to your concerns and feedback prior to the trees being removed. Where issues such as yours are raised either through our Customer Service Centre or direct with the local office staff, these calls are logged and given a reference number. However, our maintenance team have been unable to locate any records of your calls, or the reference number you have provided (the format of which does not match the type that Kāinga Ora uses). Subsequently, we have been unable to find any record of being notified that there was a chemical odour at the property, the fencing issue you refer to, or a concrete post on the berm. I am therefore refusing this part of your request under section 18(e) of the Act 'as the information requested does not exist or cannot be found.' If you would like to provide more information about these matters, you can contact Fletcher Tay, Regional Property Manager, through the Customer Services Centre on 0800 801 601, to discuss them.

I agree that Kāinga Ora has a responsibility to support the welfare of its customers and their families. Kāinga Ora does this by providing homes that meet their needs, keeping these homes well-maintained, and responding to health and safety issues that arise. Kāinga Ora supports its customers' wellbeing by recognising their right to live in their homes with dignity and without undue interference in their lives. However, Kāinga Ora is not responsible for customers' leisure activities. This means it does not provide equipment, have a role in determining or encouraging the activities children engage in, or collect data on what those activities in their homes are.

Similarly, Kāinga Ora has no authority to assist unemployed customers into employment. The Ministry of Social Development is the agency working in this area.

While Kāinga Ora staff are in regular contact with staff from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development to discuss strategic objectives, their involvement is at that level. Kāinga Ora staff do not discuss or seek agreement on decisions about the maintenance of individual properties.

Kāinga Ora removed all the trees at 193 Mungavin Avenue because they were blocking natural light to the property. The decision to remove the trees was made by Kāinga Ora in consultation with a qualified arborist. This was done to ensure qualified, independent advice was obtained about any potential health and safety risks that leaving the trees in place would pose, and whether there were any alternative solutions. Kāinga Ora was advised that the trees posed a health and safety concern as the lack of light was causing mould. The assessment also considered long-term issues for those living in the affected home, including future health risks that can occur as a result of exposure to mould arising from a lack of natural light and dry air. In addition to this, there was the further risk of the trees falling, which present a very high risk not only to damage of the home but also possibly injuries to our customers living in it.

The place-based approach Kāinga Ora is taking refers to the way the organisation and its management of properties is structured. In this case, removing the trees was considered to be the best option for our customers. Costs were not a factor in this decision. While two of the trees could have been trimmed, they would require ongoing maintenance so, while this would have initially produced less waste to dispose of, this would not necessarily have been more cost effective in the long-term. These trees would also still have blocked light once cut back. The other trees were structurally compromised so trimming was not an option.

Kāinga Ora does not have a blanket policy to remove trees in all tenancies. While trees can play a role in reducing emissions and providing protection from sun and wind, we prioritise removing specific trees putting people at risk, so customers (and in a lot of cases, their neighbours) can be safe in their homes.

Kāinga Ora is aware the older homes in its portfolio can be drafty and cold. This is not unusual, given the age of most our homes. Our Retrofit Programme has been specifically designed to bring all our homes up to the new Healthy Homes standards, by making them warmer and drier. Kāinga Ora also provides information to customers on how to keep their homes warm and dry at [www.kaingaora.govt.nz/tenants-and-communities/our-tenants-health-and-safety/keeping-your-home-warm-and-dry/](http://www.kaingaora.govt.nz/tenants-and-communities/our-tenants-health-and-safety/keeping-your-home-warm-and-dry/).

Kāinga Ora was not made aware of the presence of a beehive on the property. Pest control contractors are required to remove beehives. If we became aware that contractors had removed a beehive without advising Kāinga Ora, we would ask them to notify us in future, so we can manage the removal. Customers are also advised ahead of time of any pest removal work, although Kāinga Ora is not required to advise neighbours of the same (this includes if a beehive is found on our property).

When Kāinga Ora properties are vacant we ensure gardens are in a tidy and manageable state for the new tenant. We are also aware that not all customers enjoy gardening and others prefer to start their own garden from scratch. If, at the start of this process, a new tenant asks us to leave the garden as it is, we will do so. Although Kāinga Ora acknowledges that gardens can provide many benefits, it is up to customers whether or not they choose to maintain a garden.

Yours sincerely



Rachel Kelly  
**Manager, Government Relations**