



OIA23-0529

4 October 2023

fyi-request-24031-dbfab6a7@requests.fyi.org.nz

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for your email of 4 September 2023 requesting information relating to modernising agency technology and digital strategies. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) supports the success and sustainability of our \$57.4 billion-dollar primary sector, which contributes to New Zealand's economy and prosperity as our largest export sector.

MPI strives to be responsive to the primary sector and its internal customers. Digital technology improves our ability to deliver to, and support, an efficient and connected primary sector. The key to this is operating holistically across MPI as a single enterprise, by rationalising and consolidating systems, information, and processes across business units.

MPI integrates and re-uses technology as much as possible. This enables the Ministry to operate and maintain its legacy systems from MPI's predecessor organisations while migrating to new digital capabilities, and deliver effective technology solutions, including for use by MPI staff.

Please find responses to each of your questions below.

I understand that the broader govt is placing quite a bit of focus on modernising agency technology and digital strategies and I'd like to know that MPI is doing the same. Could I please see (from team manager and above level) any email correspondence, briefs, memos, meeting minutes and any other documents held regarding the current state of MPI agency technology suites (i.e. Microsoft Sharepoint, Outlook, mobile app permissions, restrictions and licensing, GIS platforms, health and safety monitoring software, payroll processing etc), concerns raised about the suitability of current systems, complaints about program restrictions impacting usability, requests for improvement, rejected proposals for IT & system upgrades and any timelines for future implementation of new or improved systems? Date range of interest is 2019 - present.

Your request in its current form is very broad in nature, therefore your request is declined pursuant to section 18(f) of the OIA, as *the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.*

However, we have provided information below regarding MPI's technology use and approach.

Eight outcomes drive our technology use and approach. These are:

1. Digital solutions are our preferred way to solve our business challenges.
2. Our technology landscape is streamlined, has greater resilience and is financially sustainable.
3. We understand and interact with our customers holistically.
4. Our customers have a consistent digital channel to engage and transact with us.
5. Office and other transactional processes are efficient, visible and consistent across MPI.
6. Our people have the tools they need to perform their work from any location.
7. Data is appropriately accessible across MPI to multiply our insights potential.
8. Our data is an asset that can be appropriately shared with our sector partners.

For staff, MPI uses the Microsoft 365 suite of products including Sharepoint and Outlook. MPI's technology set up was vital during the COVID-19 pandemic to enable staff to work remotely to continue supporting the operation of the vital primary sector.

MPI's technology approach and work is guided by seven principles:

1. Focus on business value.
2. Our platforms should be cloud-native to provide the associated benefits of scalability and resilience, and support MPI to ensure our technology remains current.
3. Where possible the technology platforms used to deliver our core capabilities will be maximised by reusing them across different capabilities.
4. MPI will look to compose its future platforms using "off-the-shelf" components and common capabilities reducing the time spent on platform creation, ensuring business value can be delivered faster.
5. MPI's future platforms are extensible and interoperable between each other and with other internal and external systems to ensure they can evolve with MPI's future needs
6. Simplify our technology landscape by taking a careful design and product decision process.
7. Take a security and 'resilience by design' approach in our platform design process.

MPI has chosen to deliver its common capabilities using six platforms. These platforms under implementation enable us to deliver world-class digital services using a small set of highly capable products that work together to support MPI's digital vision.

The platforms are:

- Customer management and engagement platform - This provides MPI the capabilities required to deliver a consistent and highly functional customer experience, utilising MPI's existing use of Salesforce.
- Service fulfilment platform - This provides functionality to manage and automate our work in support of service delivery.
- Data management and storage platform - A dedicated and highly functional data platform to support MPI's need and desire to be an insights-led organisation.
- Integration platform - This orchestrates the flow of information and processes between the platforms, other MPI systems and MPI stakeholders.
- Workplace productivity platform - Microsoft 365 has been chosen as the workplace productivity platform to enable increased communication, collaboration and flexible working options.
- Infrastructure and delivery platform - This provides an environment to create and deliver specialised applications.

I'm also interested to know whether there are interagency conversations ongoing to standardise the IT systems to improve interoperability across agencies? Who are they with, what programs and systems are they, and are there timelines for this?

MPI is an active participant in [All of Government Agreements](#), and more recently, the [All of Government Marketplace](#). In doing so, we are leveraging common capabilities which assist with interoperability between agencies. For example, MPI has worked alongside New Zealand Customs and the Ministry for Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) to design and build the [New Zealand Traveller Declaration](#) system, to meet the border requirements of each agency.

Finally, I understand that MPI has a reputation for being needlessly restrictive with technology upgrades and at times does not permit staff to use software, applications or features already approved for use by other govt agencies, all under the guise of Information Security. Has this been raised directly to the Chief Security Officer or above, and if so, has this resulted in any quantifiable improvement for MPI staff?

MPI personnel have the digital tools needed to perform their duties to the high standards that are required. This matter has not been raised with the Chief Security Officer or above. MPI takes information security seriously and takes a risk-based approach when assessing new software, applications, and features. Technology upgrades are encouraged from an information security perspective as they maintain system supportability and often introduce enhanced security features and protections.

Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise these with the Ministry for Primary Industries at Official.InformationAct@mpi.govt.nz. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143 or at info@ombudsman.parliament.nz.

Yours sincerely

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

Paul Lovett
Chief Digital Officer