

Hon Chris Hipkins



MP for Rimutaka

Minister of Education

Minister of State Services

Leader of the House

Minister Responsible for Ministerial Services

23 NOV 2018

David Farrar

fyi-request-8638-a4f5f509@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear David

Thank you for your email of 10 October 2018 requesting the following information:

"Between 1 January 2018 and 31 August 2018, how many e-mails have you, in a ministerial capacity, sent or received through e-mail accounts that are not administered by The Parliamentary Service or The Department of Internal Affairs?"

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). I apologise for the delay in the response to you.

I can confirm that I have a private email account that I use for personal matters. There is regularly an interface between my private and official duties, for example when it comes to diary scheduling. In those cases, I will forward emails from my personal address to my Senior Private Secretary (SPS), whereupon they enter the official email system.

It should be noted that this is not the means of conveyance that denotes whether something is official information or not. For example, I may forward details of personal engagements to my SPS so that they can be noted in my diary. That action does not automatically make it official information.

There have also been a very limited number of occasions since I became Minister where my parliamentary email address has been unavailable due to technical issues. My staff have, on a very limited number of instances, forwarded material to my personal email address so that I can have access to it while out of the office.

The most common example of this is where press releases and background briefing material has been sent to me ahead of media interviews. I do not consider this to be conducting business in my Ministerial capacity.

None of the information sent to my personal email address has been classified and it is all being maintained in accordance with the Public Records Act and is made available for Official Information Act requests

It would also take a considerable amount of time to manually search for every instance where information was exchanged from my personal account to my parliamentary staff, and to then identify whether that was official information or not.

Your request is therefore declined in accordance with section 18(e) of the Official Information Act that the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found. If you are interested in material I have received on a particular topic I invite you to make a further request for that information.

I suspect, however, that your wider concern is that personal email addresses are being used to avoid public disclosure or scrutiny. I can give you an absolute reassurance that this is not the case.

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 or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Yours sincerely



Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education
Minister of State Services