

29 November 2024

OIA IRO-777

[REDACTED]

New Zealand Taxpayers' Union

[REDACTED] [@taxpayers.org.nz](mailto:[REDACTED]@taxpayers.org.nz)

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Request for information – Wellington Water Limited staff details and leak status

Thank you for your request of 6 November 2024 made under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act (LGOIMA – the Act) 1987 for information about Wellington Water Limited (WWL) staff and the leak status across the WWL network.

Your request is responded to in accordance with the Act. The response to your questions is available in the appendix on the next page. In regard to question three, information has been withheld under 7(2)(a) *privacy of natural persons* and 7(2)(c) *information subject to an obligation of confidence*.

In accordance with section 7(1) of the Act, we do not consider the withholding of information under the respective section(s) 7 of the Act is outweighed by other considerations which render it desirable, in the public interest, to make that information available.

Please note that it is our policy to publicly release our responses to official information requests where possible. Our response to your request will be published shortly at <https://www.wellingtonwater.co.nz/about-us/official-requests/official-information-act-responses/> with your personal information removed.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to email us at official.information@wellingtonwater.co.nz

Nāku noa, nā

[REDACTED]

Group Manager
Business Services

APPENDIX

1.
 - a. *The total staff fired, retired, resigned and hired in 2024*
 - b. *Please also include the staffing numbers on the 1st of January 2024 and Jan 1st 2023.*

- a. The total staff fired, retired, resigned, and hired in 2024:

Total Staff for 2024 (as at beginning of November):

- Hired – total **101**
 - Permanent - 89
 - Fixed term – 12
- Resigned – **41**
- Terminated – **2**

- b. Staffing numbers on the 1st of January 2024 and Jan 1st 2023.

- 1st January 2023 = **321 (headcount not FTE)**
- 1st January 2024 = **370 (headcount not FTE)**

2. *Does Wellington water record working from home and office numbers.
-If so what is the monthly average for both category's. -*

No, WWL does not record working from home or office numbers. Wellington Water encourages our people to have a good work/life balance. We support working from home arrangements and recognise there are mutual benefits to the company and to staff. Wellington Water believes a working from home arrangement of up to 40 percent of any employees' standard weekly working hours is the 'sweet spot'. It's also important to note that some roles cannot be performed from home. The 40 percent threshold supports employee wellbeing and gives employees the opportunity to work in a way that achieves optimum performance and delivers our business objectives.

3. *All correspondence relating to the January 2024 issue involving an engineer posting about slacking off from work. Including but not limited to emails, texts and written notes.*

You asked for the related correspondence regarding this matter be released to you. However, we cannot release the information in that form as this would prejudice the interests protected by sections 7(2)(a) *privacy of natural persons* and 7(2)(c) *information subject to an obligation of confidence*, where the making available of the information would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information, or information from the same source, and it is in the public interest that such information should continue to be supplied; or would be likely otherwise to damage the public interest) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

This is because the information requested is material related to an employment investigation. As previously noted by the Ombudsman, information arising out of an employment investigation is information "generated in the context of [an] employment relationship. To judge and potentially correct their conduct as an employee. The employment

relationship is one which carries with it a high expectation of privacy, and information about complaints made against an employee will commonly raise significant issues around confidentiality and privacy." ([Request for information about employment investigation involving officer's behaviour at a Police event, 13 June 2024](#))

In this matter, it is necessary to withhold the information requested given:

- the information pertains to a disciplinary process and is of a private and sensitive nature. It was obtained in the context of an employment relationship where there is an expectation of trust and confidence (as set out in the Employment Relations Act 2000) and a reasonable expectation of confidentiality; and
- disclosure of such information would damage the public interest by:
 - prejudicing the ongoing employer / employee relationship between Wellington Water and its staff, as staff would lose confidence that such allegations would be addressed fairly and in a private matter; and
 - prejudicing the future supply of information from staff who are subject to disciplinary processes.

We appreciate, however, that the interests under sections 7(2)(a) and (c) need to be weighed against the public interest in release of the information. We acknowledge that there is public interest in knowing that a public entity has taken appropriate action where its employees have engaged in misconduct, and where this misconduct has become public knowledge. Therefore, in line with previous Ombudsman decisions on the release of information related to employment investigations, we provide below a high-level summary of the process taken and the outcome of the disciplinary process:

- In January 2024 we became aware of a social media post made on Xiaohongshu titled "Council Engineer – Challenge one day slacking off and do no work. Making money while I play".
- A formal investigation commenced that included a meeting where the allegations were presented to the employee. The employee was provided with the opportunity to comment on the allegations. Following the meeting, consideration was then given to their views and what disciplinary outcome might be appropriate.
- It was concluded that the employee's actions breached Wellington Water's Code of Conduct and therefore the disciplinary process resulted in a formal disciplinary outcome.

4. *The total current leaks across the water network broken down by district.*

The total number of leaks detected across the public and private network is reported on monthly and made publicly available at : <https://www.wellingtonwater.co.nz/resources/topic/water-conservation/leaks/leak-stats> We provide a regional view, and broken down by council.

5. *The total current water lost to leaks as a percentage across the network.*

This information is publicly available on our website at the following links:

[Wellington City](#)

[Porirua](#)

[Lower Hutt](#)

[Upper Hutt](#)

[Metropolitan Regional Summary](#)

Unfortunately, WWL cannot accurately track current, or 'live' water loss or water use without universal residential metering. Universal residential metering would mean that all homes have a water meter installed, which are shown to increase public understanding of their water use, encourage water conservation, find leaks and reduce water loss.

To measure water loss for the Wellington metropolitan region, we use the Minimum Night Flow methodology that aligns with the Water NZ Water Loss Guidelines for areas with no or low water meters.

This is done annually and provides a retrospective average of water loss over the previous financial year (July to June). Due to this, it is not a strong indication of the current volume of water lost through leaks. It is however used to help Wellington Water and our council owners better understand the past financial years' water use and loss, identify any high-level trends, gauge if councils' investment and Wellington Water's efforts are having the desired impact, and to guide future investment decisions.

The most recent estimates are outlined below, and are an average of the water lost between 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

Metropolitan Region (exc. South Wairarapa)

- Public network: 32% (down from 34% FY22/23)
- Private leaks: 9% (down from 10% FY22/23)
- Total: 41% (down from 44% FY22/23)

Wellington City

- Public network: 28% (down from 31% FY22/23)
- Private leaks: 9% (equal to FY22/23)
- Total: 37% (down from 40% FY22/23)

Lower Hutt

- Public network: 35% (down from 37% FY22/23)
- Private leaks: 9% (equal to FY22/23)
- Total: 44% (down from 46% FY22/23)

Porirua

- Public network: 30% (down from 31% FY22/23)
- Private leaks: 9.5% (up 0.5% from FY22/23)
- Total: 39.5% (down from 40% FY22/23)

Upper Hutt

- Public network: 41% (down from 44% FY22/23)
- Private leaks: 9% (up 1% from FY22/23)
- Total: 50% (down from 52% FY22/23)

6. *The average time taken to repair a standard leak.*

The information detailed in the table below shows Financial Year 2023-24's median repair time in hours for a non-urgent (standard) leak, categorised as P3 or P4. It does not reflect the repair time for urgent leaks (P1 and P2), or the current median repair time for non-urgent leaks.

As a response to the volume of leaks in the network, and to work as efficiently and effectively as possible with the funding available to us, Wellington Water has created a clear prioritisation process. The most urgent leaks are those that cause a loss of water supply to customers or a health and safety risk, and they jump to the head of the queue.

This means that non-urgent leaks (under 10L of water lost per minute/no risk to health and safety) will be deferred for attention later.

Our leaks prioritisation framework is detailed [here](#).

	FY 23/24				
Council:	HCC	PCC	SWDC	UHCC	WCC
Median resolution times (hours)	436	357	98	597	1,030