

10 May 2024

OIA IRO-662

[REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Official information request regarding Wellington Water communications team expenditure

Thank you for your request dated 11 April 2024 requesting the following information under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (the Act):

1. *Can I get, under the LGOIMA, a year by year breakdown for the past four years up to the end of March, of the FTE number of staff on your communications team and the total amount in money spent on salaries.*
2. *Can I also get details of how much was spent on outside communications companies for each year?*

The response to your request is enclosed following this letter as an appendix.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively 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

[REDACTED]

Group Manager
Business Services (CFO)

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www.wellingtonwater.co.nz

Our water, our future.

Appendix

Question 1:

Full time equivalent (FTE) Wellington Water communications staff and salary expenditure (as recorded)

Tax year: April/March	# of FTE staff	Total Salaries Earnings
2023/2024	8	\$889,081
2022/2023	8	\$675,760
2021/2022	5	\$501,144
2020/2021	3	\$353,047

Question two:

Outside communications companies expenditure by financial year (as recorded)

Financial year: July-June	Contractors to back-fill FTE staff vacancies	External PR agencies for external strategic communications advice
2023-March 2024	\$27,856	\$4,193
2022/2023	\$163,470	\$450
2021/2022	\$28,844	\$0
2020/2021	\$196,181	\$2,990

For your information:

The Communications and Engagement Team at Wellington Water is responsible for all external communications and engagement for the organisation and it is an important function of the work we do for our community and councils.

This includes ensuring the public are aware of what's happening with their water services in their area. We notify the public of outages and wastewater discharges, keep people updated on the work in their neighbourhood which impacts them or potentially cause disruption, and regularly publish information on our work that is of high interest (e.g. leaks).

We also ensure the public understand water restrictions and what they need to do to reduce their water use. For the recent 2023/24 summer period, the Communications and Engagement Team were responsible for ensuring the public were aware of the increased risk of a potential water shortage, tighter water restrictions, and the need for people to conserve water. The public responded well and thanks to their hard mahi, the region avoided having to move up to Level 3 Water Restrictions.

As a support function to the organisation, the Communications and Engagement Team's work is driven by the organisation's programmes and delivery. In the past three years, the team increased it's capacity and number of full time employees to meet the demand of the business.

Since the 2020/21 financial year, our organisation has grown from 240 to 387 FTEs (as at 31 March 2024) to deliver on the work our councils have funded us to do. Between the 2020/21 and 2022/23 financial years our capital delivery work doubled and continues to grow. The aging infrastructure in the region has also meant we have seen a steady increase of service interruptions and outages over the past few years and an ongoing backlog of work. All of which requires us to communicate and engage with the public and our councils so they better understand the work we are delivering for them.

The Communications and Engagement Team manage Wellington Water's external channels – website and social media channels – and respond to a wide range of enquiries from the media and the public. These requests have also increased in volume due to increased attention and interest in our work.

From time to time contractors and external agencies are used to support the team when there are vacancies or if external strategic advice is needed.