

10 APR 2019



Thank you for your email of 27 February 2019 in which you make the following request:

The linked article from the Otago Daily Times indicates that the HNZ owned property in question was "blessed".

<https://www.odt.co.nz/news/dunedin/crime-scene-flat-being-readied-tenants>

Under the Official Information Act 1982, please provide the following information:

- 1. What type of blessing took place and who conducted it? Who was present?*
- 2. What was the cost to taxpayers of the blessing? Please include any indirect costs such as administration time setting up the appointment, or having a representative travel to site to provide access, or having HNZ personnel attend the ceremony.*
- 3. Under which Act or guidelines or directive does the HNZ corporation have the right or mandate to spend funds on religious or spiritual ceremonies?*
- 4. What is HNZ corporation's annual budget for arranging or facilitating religious or spiritual ceremonies?*
- 5. How many such blessings or ceremonies have taken place from 28 Feb 2018 to 28 Feb 2019?*

I apologise for the delay in providing a reply. In response to your first two questions I can advise that two Housing New Zealand tenancy managers attended the blessing at the Dunedin property, which was arranged and paid for by the New Zealand Police. Therefore, I have also referred your questions to the Police, who will respond to you separately.

Housing New Zealand does not have a budget for arranging or facilitating religious or spiritual ceremonies. Koha may be given where a blessing is conducted at a Housing New Zealand arranged event. The giving of Koha, including Koha for blessings, is an expression of the Crown's recognition of Tikanga Māori and it falls within Housing New Zealand's discretionary expenditure guidelines. A blessing may take place at the opening of a new building or development site and in other situations where appropriate.

Housing New Zealand does not have a central record of "blessings" that have been carried out at its events or properties. However, Housing New Zealand does centrally record events where Koha has been paid. Our records identify that Koha was paid three times for services described as blessings in the period 28 February 2018 to 28 February 2019. This is not a record of all events at which a blessing has taken place. To identify all such events would require a review of individual project files and consultation with numerous staff across our business. Therefore, I am declining your request for this information under section 18(f) of

the Act: *"that the information required cannot be made available without substantial collation or research."* I do not consider that fixing a charge or extending the timeframe would assist in making the information available.

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.



Rachel Kelly
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