

19 January 2023

By email: [REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED],

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) about social media, New Zealand government websites, and scientific findings, which we received on 4 December 2022.

You said:

I have a few questions regarding the censorship as per Subject line. Would like to understand the “playing field”.

Do you consider the source of information? More specific, would you discard information from recognised Scientific Medical publishers the likes of NIH or even the mighty BMJ?

Do yourselves have a working relationship with any social media channel? List perhaps?

Are you aware of any working relationship of any NZ governmental department with a social media channel? Also, could you be working together with a governmental “working group” that has a relationship with a Social Media channel?

Do you consider the NZ Government as the single source of truth relating to Covid matters? (Just quickly thinking of a few instances where time and science has force corrections to be made on various Governmental websites relating to Covid vaccination.)

Could the NZ Governmental view of covid vaccination matters overrule medical evidence based science? Carry more weight perhaps.

What processes are to be followed in the event of a New Zealand Governmental website opinion differ from a widely excepted Scientific study Internationally?

Do you test the validity of statements as per NZ Government websites and thus on a continuous basis, updating your evaluations as per scientific findings as more is learned and generally excepted internationally?

Response to your request

How publications are received and classified

Te Mana Whakaatu—the Classification Office classifies a wide variety of publications, including online content. The Office receives publications from:

- Commercial organisations, mainly via the Film and Video Labelling Body, which is funded by film distributors;
- Enforcement officials, such as the New Zealand Police, Customs Service, and Department of Internal Affairs;
- The courts, who can refer a publication to the Office if it is unclear whether the publication is, or should remain, restricted or objectionable;
- Members of the public, who can apply for leave to submit a publication for classification; and
- The Chief Censor, who can ‘call in’ a publication for the Office to classify if the publication poses a risk of harm to the public.

Publications can only be restricted or banned according to the [criteria](#) in the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993. These criteria include matters such as sex, horror, crime, cruelty or violence. The Office cannot restrict or ban publications on the basis of their fairness, balance, accuracy, authoritativeness or scientific validity.

More information about how the Office receives and classifies publications is available on our [website](#).

The Office is an independent Crown entity. This means that while it is part of the wider state service, it does not classify publications, or perform any of its other functions, at the direction of elected government officials or public service departments.

Publications relating to COVID-19

No publications produced or distributed by the New Zealand government relating to COVID-19 or scientific findings, including vaccination for COVID-19, have been classified or received for classification by the Classification Office. You can find these publications on agency websites, including [Ministry of Health, Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand](#), and [Unite against COVID-19](#).

The Office does not monitor information produced or distributed by the New Zealand government in case it needs to be classified.

Social media channels

The Classification Office regularly meets with a wide range of organisations across the public and private sectors.

The Office is not carrying out any ongoing work with social media channels. However, we occasionally meet with representatives of social media companies. For example, in 2022, our office met with representatives from Meta, Google and TikTok. These meetings allow our office to discuss areas of shared interest with different organisations.

We are not aware of any specific working relationships between government departments and social media channels. Other government agencies engage with social media channels as part of their roles. Specific agencies would be able to provide information about any working relationships they have with social media channels.

Publication of response

This response may be published on the Classification Office's [website](#). If it is published there, your personal information will be redacted.

Right of review

You have the right to make a complaint and seek a review by the Ombudsman of this response under [section 28\(3\) of the OIA](#). Information about this process is available at ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Thank you for your interest in our mahi.

Ngā mihi nui,
Te Mana Whakaatu—Classification Office