

27 January 2017

Bob McCoskrie  
Family First NZ  
'bob@familyfirst.org.nz'

Dear Bob,

I refer to your Official Information Act 1982 (Official Information Act) request, received by the Department of Internal Affairs (Department) on 13 December 2016.

**You have requested:**

**Since the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading of the Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Act 2013 (17 April 2013)**

- 1. How many marriage celebrants have had their application for registration as a marriage celebrant denied or not renewed or cancelled because they were unwilling to marry (be a marriage celebrant for) same-sex couples*
- 2. Please provide the above information broken down in to independent celebrants, those under approved independent organisations, and those under the 'mainline' churches listed in the Act.*
- 3. Please provide breakdown by application denied, application not renewed, application cancelled*
- 4. How many complaints have you received regarding Celebrants not being willing to perform same sex marriages. And what has been the outcome of each of those complaints.*

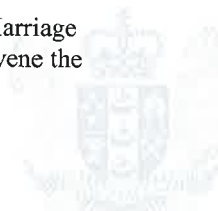
### Official response

The Department has held statistics electronically, for marriage celebrant appointment under Section 11 of the Marriage Act 1955 (Marriage Act), since 7 September 2015. From this date the Department has declined 22 out of a total of 681 applications, based on intention on the part of the applicant to not solemnise same sex marriages.

Applications under Section 11 of the Marriage Act that were considered prior to 7 September 2015 are stored in paper format. There would be a significant cost to retrieve these records and identify and collate the information sought. This information is refused pursuant to Section 18 (f) of the Official Information Act.

Based on information available at present we can confirm the following:

- Celebrants appointed under Sections 9 and 10 of the Marriage Act are not vetted or interviewed by the Department prior to their appointment.
- Celebrants applying under Section 10 of the Marriage Act provide evidence of support from members within their organisation and also details of any previous convictions.
- Section 29 of the Marriage Act covers celebrants appointed under Sections 9 and 10 of the Marriage Act and states that they are not obliged to solemnise marriages if that marriage would contravene the



religious beliefs of the religious body or the religious beliefs or philosophical or humanitarian convictions of the approved organisation.

- There are no marriage celebrants that the Department has either cancelled their appointment, or refused to renew their appointment as part of the annual celebrant renewal process under Sections 12 and 13 of the Marriage Act.
- The Department does not ask for specific reasons why a celebrant chooses to not apply to renew their appointment.
- The Department has received no written complaints about marriage celebrants who are unwilling to solemnise a same sex marriage.

You have the right to request an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision under section 28 of the Official Information Act. The Ombudsman can be contacted at:

Office of the Ombudsman  
PO Box 10152  
Wellington 6143

Yours Sincerely,



Briget Ridden  
Manager Business Improvement and Support  
Births, Deaths, Marriages, Citizenship and Translations