



22 MAR 2018

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Dear Mr McCoskrie

Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) request 17/18-0303

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 received by the Department of Internal Affairs (Department) on 8 March 2018.

You requested

Since the 3rd 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*
 - 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.*
 - Please provide breakdown by application denied, application not renewed, application cancelled*
- 2. 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.*

We have responded to your request in two parts.

- 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*

Declined Applications

Since 7 September 2015, the Department has declined 47 Independent Celebrant applications based on intention on the part of the applicant not to solemnise same-sex marriages. There have been 1592 applications received by people wanting to be an Independent Celebrant since 7 September 2015. Applications made prior to 7 September 2015 are held in paper format and cannot be reviewed without substantial collation or research. The number of celebrants declined between 17 April 2013 and 7 October 2015 is therefore refused as per section 18(f) of the Official Information Act 1982.

Not renewed or Cancelled

The Department has not declined to renew or cancelled any independent marriage celebrants registration since 17 April 2013 because they were unwilling to perform a same-sex marriage.

Organisational Celebrants

Marriage celebrants appointed under section 9 or 10 of the Marriages Act 1955 (the Act) as organisational celebrants are not obliged to solemnise any marriage that would contravene the religious beliefs of the organisation. The Department has therefore not declined, cancelled or refused to renew any organisational celebrants because they were unwilling to perform a same-sex marriage.

2. *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.*

The Department has received no written complaints about marriage celebrants who are unwilling to solemnise a same sex marriage.

Additional Information

- Independent marriage celebrants are appointed by the Registrar-General of Births, Deaths and Marriages under section 11 the Act.
- In addition to meeting the requirements set down in the Act, independent marriage celebrants must make themselves available to all persons legally able to marry in New Zealand and cannot refuse to solemnise any marriage due to reasons that would contravene the Human Rights Act 1993.
- Marriage celebrant appointed under section 9 and 10 of the Act are not interviewed by the Department prior to their appointment, but must provide support from members of their organisation and provide details of any previous convictions.

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.

Yours sincerely



Briget Ridden
Manager Business Development and Support
Service Delivery and Operations