



14 November 2019

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Dear Bob

OIA request 19/20 0328 Request for statistics on marriage celebrants unwilling to marry same-sex couples

Thank you for your Official Information Act (Act) request received by the Department of Internal Affairs (Department) on 17 October 2019.

You requested, since the 3rd Reading of the Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Act 2013 (17 April 2013 through to October 2019)

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.*

Previous response 22 March 2018

Please refer our previous response, dated 22 March 2018, attached alongside this letter for the answers to your questions between dates 7 September 2015 and 8 March 2018*.

Applications made prior to 7 September 2015 are held in paper format and cannot be reviewed without substantial collation or research. Therefore, again we must refuse your request for the number of celebrant applications declined between 17 April 2013 and 7 September 2015, as per section 18(f) of the Act.

*Please note there may be a small period of cross over from the previous response and this response as we are unable to confirm with certainty that the statistics provided were collated to 8 March 2018.

New data from 8 March 2018

The following information covers the period 8 March 2018 to 5 November 2019 (the date when the statistics were collated).

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 08 March 2018, the Registrar-General has declined 26 independent celebrant applications based on intention on the part of the application to not solemnise same-sex marriages. There have been 1,308 applications received from people wishing to be an independent celebrant since 8 March 2018.

Not Renewed or Cancelled

The Registrar-General has not declined to renew, nor cancelled any independent marriage celebrant registrations 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 as organisational celebrants are not obliged to solemnise any marriage that would contravene the religious beliefs of their organisation. Therefore the Registrar-General has not declined, cancelled or refused to renew any organisational celebrants due to them being 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.*

No written complaints have been received about marriage celebrants who are unwilling to solemnise a same-sex marriage.

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

Clare Toufexis
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