



10 FEB 2021

On 19 January 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information in response to your previous request:

- *A copy of iSign latest contract with MSD, and Connect Interpreting latest contract with MSD, as well as the latest reports associated with their contracts.*

You also requested clarification on the following questions:

1. *There are no records of how often communicators are provided by iSign instead of qualified interpreters? And no records of how often they can't provide a qualified interpreter and obviously no requirement for them to record and report on that information?*
2. *Can you also confirm, 'all NZSL interpreters must be qualified and members of SLIANZ? Does that mean communicators are not being used anymore?*
3. *What is the call centre protocol? Do they contact iSign first? What systems are in place to ensure the Deaf client is getting a qualified NZSL interpreter? If iSign says they can't provide an interpreter, is Connect then contacted? Is the client offered a choice?*
4. *Does the Ministry's contract with iSign still allow a clause where iSign can provide an unqualified communicator in place of a NZSL interpreter?*
5. *What systems does the Ministry have in place to ensure NZSL interpreters are qualified and what systems are in place to ensure Deaf clients can chose which interpreter service they want their NZSL interpreter booked through?*

I will answer the following question of your request first:

- *A copy of iSign latest contract with MSD, and Connect Interpreting latest contract with MSD, as well as the latest reports associated with their contracts.*

Please find attached a copy of the Connect Interpreting Limited's latest contract.

The Ministry will not be providing you with a copy of the iSign contract as this has been provided to you previously. Therefore, this part of your question is refused under 18(d) of the Act on the basis that the information requested has already been released to you.

If you do require another copy of the iSign contract, let us know and we can provide you with this.

The Ministry has not received any reports from Connect Interpreting Limited or iSign associated with their contracts. The Ministry is currently addressing these matters directly with them.

I will now address the questions that require clarification in turn:

1. *There are no records of how often communicators are provided by iSign instead of qualified interpreters? And no records of how often they can't provide a qualified interpreter and obviously no requirement for them to record and report on that information?*

The Ministry does not have any records of how often communicators are provided by iSign, as this is at the request of the client who has to specially request a communicator. Unlike an interpreter, a communicator does not have to be qualified. Many have partially-completed the interpreting qualification, others have learned solely on-the-job. There is at least one communicator in New Zealand that has a NAATI qualification from Australia. More information about NAATI can be found here: www.naati.com.au.

2. *Can you also confirm, 'all NZSL interpreters must be qualified and members of SLIANZ? Does that mean communicators are not being used anymore?*

All interpreters must be qualified and a member of the Sign Language Interpreters Association of New Zealand (SLIANZ) and as previously mentioned, communicators are only used if they are specifically requested by the client.

3. *What is the call centre protocol? Do they contact iSign first?*

The Ministry's call centre uses either the relay service or video remote interpreting service as it is a telephony service. More information on these services can be found here: www.nzrelay.co.nz/index. The client is offered a choice on which service they would like to use. The Ministry does not choose one on their behalf.

4. *Does the Ministry's contract with iSign still allow a clause where iSign can provide an unqualified communicator in place of a NZSL interpreter?*

There is no clause in the contract between the Ministry and iSign where an unqualified communicator can be provided in place of a NZSL interpreter. Communicators are only used if they are specifically requested by the client and are not offered in place of a NZSL interpreter.

5. What systems does the Ministry have in place to ensure NZSL interpreters are qualified and what systems are in place to ensure Deaf clients can choose which interpreter service they want their NZSL interpreter booked through?

The Ministry's current systems are in place to ensure NZSL interpreters are qualified as per the contract. If iSign or Connect Interpreting Ltd were to provide an unqualified interpreter then they would be breaking the contract that they have signed with the Ministry. As mentioned above, the client is offered a choice on which service they would like to use. The Ministry does not choose one on their behalf.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter and attachments on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted, and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response in regard to the contracts for iSign and Connect Interpreting, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui



Anne Hawker
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