



17 May 2018

Peter Newport
Managing Editor
Southern Community Media Trust

Sent via email to peter@newportmedia.nz

Dear Peter

REQUEST FOR OFFICIAL INFORMATION - DECISION TO RELEASE

We refer to your official information request dated 16 April 2018 regarding Queenstown Lakes District Council's expenditure on external consultants.

Decision to partially release information requested and associated charges

Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) has decided to grant the following aspects of your request:

- ***“We would like to request an updated version of the attached spreadsheet which shows the amount paid by QLDC to external contractors. The attached information was provided to us by QLDC on August 3, 2017.”***

Given the amount of resource required to process your request, a charge will apply for making part of the requested information available. We estimate that the maximum charge will be \$1,140. This charge is based on 16 hours of staff time, charged at \$38 per half hour or part thereof, less \$76 in recognition of QLDC's first-hour-free policy.

Before we proceed further with your request, please confirm your agreement to the charge. If you agree to accept the charge QLDC will issue you with an invoice for \$570 (50%). On receipt of payment we will commence with the preparation of the information, and undertake to have this ready for release within one working week. The information will then be released to you with an invoice for the balance of the actual hours expended on the work, up to the value of the maximum charge quoted above.

We have considered whether extending the timeframe to respond will enable us to provide the requested information to you without fixing a charge, and do not believe this is feasible for the following reasons:

- The nature of the work associated with your request is most efficiently completed in one work-block
- You have expressed a clear need to receive this information as a matter of priority (your email of 16 April states that your *“deadline for this material was April 11... so [you] are already running a long way behind schedule”*)
- We do not consider it a prudent use of ratepayer-funded resource to allocate considerable staff time to a request until we are confident opportunities to refine the scope of the request have been explored and exhausted. This point also speaks to why we do not believe it is appropriate to consider a reduction or waiver of the charges associated with fulfilling this request.

- ***“Total value of consultancy work commissioned by QLDC over the past 10 and 20 years? Social media comments have put this at \$20 million over 10 years...is this figure correct?”***
- ***“Who are the top five consultants used by the council? Value of contracts? How much has been spent with Rationale consultants (Arrowtown) in total?”***

We refer to our letter of 19 April 2018 in which we advised the above two points had been aggregated with the request quoted on the first page of this letter.

With the exception of the total value of consultancy work commissioned by QLDC over the past 20 years, your above questions will be answered by the information provided through the updated table you have requested.

Decision to withhold remaining information requested

QLDC has decided to refuse your request for information which relates to the total value of consultancy work over the past 20 years under section 17(e) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987. This section applies when the information requested doesn't exist, or despite reasonable efforts, cannot be located.

QLDC's financial system does not hold information dating back this far, and we cannot be confident that a review of our electronic and paper records would adequately identify all expenditure falling within the scope of this request. In any event, such a review could not be completed without requiring substantial collation and research that would unreasonably interfere with our organisation's activities.

Right to review the above decisions

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of these decisions. Information about this process is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss these decisions with us, please contact us at informationrequest@qldc.govt.nz or on 03 441 0499.

Kind regards



Jesse Taylor
Governance Advisor