

Reference: 20230310



20 July 2023

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your Official Information Act request, received on 21 June 2023. You requested:

I have searched online, through your website, the Budget website, and data.govt.nz but cannot find the raw data that comprises the "Expenditure - Budget 2023 Data from the Estimates of Appropriations 2023/24" XLSX workbook published here: <https://budget.govt.nz/budget/2023/data-library.htm#estimates>.

The Budget documents can be downloaded from here: <https://budget.govt.nz/budget/2023/by/vote/index.htm>, but are only available in PDF or DOC versions, and make it close to impossible to piece back together the detailed Vote and Appropriations by Policy Initiative. Therefore my request is as follows:

Please provide in XLSX format a file or files containing the following information:

- All raw data for all Votes and Appropriations, by Policy Initiative*
- For 2022/23 Final Budgeted, 2023/24 Budget, 2024/25 Estimate, outyears if available*
- Broken down by all expenditure/expense types*
- Broken down by all revenue/receipt types*
- Include all linking identifiers, e.g. the Portfolio ID, the Appropriation ID, the Vote ID, etc...*
- Include the scope of each Appropriation, and the wording attached to each linking identifier*

For clarity of the response, do not include any Assessment of Performance measures, target or actual.

Part two of my request is just a question: Why is the raw data not publicly available, if it is, then can the links to it be made more prominent on the Budget.govt.nz website?

Under section 4(1) of the Public Finance Act 1989, “the Crown, must not incur expenses or capital expenditure, except as expressly authorised by an appropriation, or other authority, by or under an Act.”

As required under the Public Finance Act 1989, following each Budget, Parliament passes the Annual Appropriation (2023/24 Estimates Act) 2023. This is where they approve spending for all appropriations up to their maximum amount. To do this, the Estimates of Appropriations for the Government of New Zealand are produced to support the passage of the annual Estimates legislation. Those Estimates are created using the Crown Financial Information System (CFISnet). CFISnet automatically aggregates all changes to funding for each appropriation. This information is auto populated from the relevant Votes and appropriations in the Estimates module of CFISnet. Accordingly, the expenses raw data is published at the appropriation level.

Much of the supporting information in these Estimates is manually entered by the Department that administers the Vote. This includes the New Policy Initiatives table, and the Current and Past Policy Initiatives table, but only by appropriation. This information is therefore not contained in CFISnet in a searchable format. Accordingly, to fulfil your request would require substantial manual collation of the data, which would unfortunately, only partially answer your request if undertaken.

Your request is therefore refused under section 18(f) of the OIA - the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research. I have considered whether the Treasury would be able to respond to this request in full if given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Treasury’s ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

The Treasury has an on-going commitment to improving the transparency of financial information. As noted above there are a number of challenges and costs involved with making information available in XLSX format by Policy Initiative. The Treasury is considering different ways of making financial information more accessible over the coming years as resources permit. For example, we have made sure that reporting on the Climate Emergency Response Fund and North Island Weather Events funding data can be accessed in an open-source format.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) and enclosed documents may be published on the Treasury website.

This reply addresses the information you requested. You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision.

Yours sincerely

Lucy Connell
Manager, Budget Team