

17 July 2025

s9(2)(a)

Mālo e lēlei **s9(2)(a)**

RESPONSE TO AN OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUEST (REF: DOIA053-2024/25)

On 18 June 2025, you contacted the Ministry for Pacific Peoples (the Ministry) requesting under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), information relating to Tupu Aotearoa and correspondence between the Ministry and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade. I have outlined your specific request and my response below.

Requesting under the OIA the following. Happy for a tranche release – titles first then full documents second. Would be happy to hold a scoping meeting once we have the titles so we can modify the request to the documents of interest.

Tranche 1

- *Titles of all advice, aide-memoire, briefings, memos, or any other documents related to Tupu Aotearoa since October 2023*
- *Titles of all advice, aide-memoire, briefings, memos, or any other documents regarding joint ventures with MSD regarding Tupu Aotearoa since October 2023*
- *Titles of all advice, aide-memoire, briefings, memos, or any other documents sent to the Minister of Pacific Peoples regarding Tupu Aotearoa since October 2023*
- *Titles of all advice, aide-memoire, briefings, memos, or any other documents sent or received by MPP regarding Tupu Aotearoa since October 2023*
- *Titles of all advice, aide-memoire, briefings, memos, or any other documents sent by MPP to MFAT since October 2023*

Auckland

9 Ronwood Ave, Manukau
PO Box 97005,
South Auckland Mail Centre 2240
P: 09 265 3200

Wellington National Office

Level 7, 1 Bowen House
Wellington, 6011
PO Box 833, Wellington 6143
P: 04 473 4493

Christchurch

Level 1, BNZ Centre
120 Hereford St
Private Bag 4741,
Christchurch 8011

- *Titles of all advice, aide-memoire, briefings, memos, or any other documents received by MPP from MFAT since October 2023*
- *Titles of all advice, aide-memoire, briefings, memos, or any other documents sent or received by MPP regarding the Pacific Regional Agenda.*

Tranche 2

- *Copies of all advice, aide-memoire, briefings, memos, or any other documents related to Tupu Aotearoa since October 2023*
- *Copies of all advice, aide-memoire, briefings, memos, or any other documents regarding joint ventures with MSD regarding Tupu Aotearoa since October 2023*
- *Copies of all advice, aide-memoire, briefings, memos, or any other documents sent to the Minister of Pacific People regarding Tupu Aotearoa since October 2023*
- *Copies of all advice, aide-memoire, briefings, memos, or any other documents sent to MPP regarding Tupu Aotearoa since October 2023*
- *Copies of all advice, aide-memoire, briefings, memos, or any other documents sent by MPP to MFAT since October 2023*
- *Copies of all advice, aide-memoire, briefings, memos, or any other documents received by MPP from MFAT since October 2023*
- *Copies of all advice, aide-memoire, briefings, memos, or any other documents sent or received by MPP regarding the Pacific Regional Agenda.*

On 30 June 2025, the Ministry sought further clarification from you regarding correspondence with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade, and documents relating to the Pacific regional agenda. On 1 July 2025, you refined this part of your request as follows:

- *Copies of all advice, aide memoire, briefings, memos, or any other documents sent by MPP and MFAT since October 2023 regarding the Pacific regional agenda*
- *Copies of all advice, aide memoire, briefings, memos, or any other documents received by MPP from MFAT since October 2023 regarding the Pacific regional agenda*

Tupu Aotearoa

I have identified five documents that contain the information you requested, and these are itemised in **Appendix 1**.

Please note:

- Documents one to four have been withheld in full, as their content is largely outside the scope of your request. However, information relating to Tupu Aotearoa within these documents has been released to you. Where the information on Tupu Aotearoa is being released, some information has been withheld under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the OIA to protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials.
- Document five is a paper dedicated to Tupu Aotearoa, however, the majority of the information has been withheld under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the OIA.

I am satisfied that there are no public interest considerations that render it desirable to make the information withheld under section 9 of the OIA available.

Pacific Regional Agenda

The Ministry does not hold any information with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade relating to the Pacific Regional Agenda. I am therefore refusing this part of your request under section 18 (e) of the OIA, as the information requested does not exist.

In line with standard OIA practice, the Ministry proactively publishes some of its responses to OIA requests. As such, this letter may be published on the Ministry for Pacific Peoples' website. Your personal details will be removed, and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you or your organisation.

Should you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact the Ministry at: ia_requests@mpp.govt.nz.

If you are dissatisfied with this response, you have the right, under section 28(3) of the OIA, to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Mālō 'aupito



Dr James Greenwell
Interim Deputy Secretary
Policy and Insights

Appendix 1 – List of documents

#	DATE	TITLE	DECISION ON RELEASE
1.	1 December 2023	Priority outcomes over the next 12 months	Withholding the full paper as out of scope, but releasing paragraphs 15 – 17, and Target 4 from the appendix.
2.	7 December 2023	Supplementary information on priority targets	Withholding the full paper as out of scope, but releasing paragraphs 35 to 38.
3.	12 January 2024	Update on the Ministry's programmes	Withholding the full paper as out of scope, but releasing 'Appendix 6'. Some information is withheld from this appendix under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the OIA.
4.	16 February 2024	Update on the Ministry's programmes	Withholding the full paper as out of scope, but releasing 'Appendix 2'. Some information is withheld from this appendix under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the OIA.
5.	6 December 2024	The future direction of Tupu Aotearoa	Withholding the full paper under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the OIA, but releasing paragraphs 8 to 16.

Excerpt – Briefing: Ministry for Pacific Peoples to Minister for Pacific Peoples
(ref B013-2023/24 – dated 1 December 2023)

Priority targets over the next 12 months for the: Pacific Peoples portfolio

Target 4: Increasing the number of Pacific peoples participating in education, employment, and training

15. **Issue:** The quality of life of New Zealanders is dependent on multiple factors, including access to decent work. However, for many of our Pacific peoples (particularly youth), the challenge is how to access it. Data shows that Pacific peoples already experience disproportionately low rates of employment and education, which is exacerbated by the lack of employment support at the regional level. At the same time, we know that Pacific youth form a fast-growing demographic that can be well positioned to make a material contribution to New Zealand's future economy.
16. **Our response:** The Ministry's Tupu Aotearoa programme provides a pathway to work, helping Pacific peoples aged 15 years and over who are not in education, employment, or training access opportunities and secure jobs. We work with 20 service providers across New Zealand to provide mentoring, pastoral care, and ongoing advice for participants to help secure and sustain employment, training, or study. Tupu Aotearoa is responsive to changing demographics: recognising the migration of Pacific communities from urban centres to the regions, we target the Ministry's support to these areas. Investment in this programme is derived from a total budget allocation of \$70.883 million, allocated from the 2019/20 financial year through to the 2026/27 financial year.
17. **Impact:** The Ministry considers that this investment will not only help to address long-term unemployment of Pacific peoples through targeted early interventions, but also contribute to stimulating regional economic development. By 30 June 2024, Tupu Aotearoa aims to get over 2,000 Pacific people who are not currently contributing to the economy to get involved in education, employment, or training.

Excerpt – Briefing: Ministry for Pacific Peoples to Minister for Pacific Peoples
(ref B015-2023/24 – dated 7 December 2023)

Supplementary information on priority targets

Our approach to reducing Pacific peoples who are NEET

35. The Tupu Aotearoa programme has a total appropriation of \$70.88 million over the last five years aims to assist Pacific peoples who are NEET to obtain:
- sustainable employment and/or
 - undertake further training to increase their skills or qualifications.
36. We work with 20 providers to support participants on their journey to employment, further training, or study. The programme provides a range of support services including assisting with job searches, identifying appropriate upskilling and training courses, obtaining a driver's license, pastoral care and post-placement support.

Specific outcomes being delivered

37. During 2022/23, the Tupu Aotearoa programme helped 2,071 participants into employment, training, study, or work experience placement.
38. Over the next 12 months, the Ministry will support over 2,000 Pacific peoples to start new education employment or training through Ministry-supported initiatives.



Tupu Aotearoa

Boosting skills and employment for confident, thriving and resilient young people

THE NEED

A significant proportion of Pacific young people are not in education, employment, or training (NEET). In June 2023, 17.3% of Pacific peoples aged 15-24 years were identified as not in employment, education, or training (NEET) compared to 11.8% from all ethnicities in the same age group.¹ Wages are lower for Pacific peoples. In 2023, the median hourly income for Pacific peoples was lower than the rest of the population (\$28.34 compared to the national median of \$31.61). Further, Pacific women experience the largest gender pay gap, \$28.00 compared to the national median of \$30.15 for all women.²

Pacific workers were also more underutilised. In 2023, 12.8% of the Pacific workforce was underutilised versus 9.3% for all ethnicities. This is despite Pacific peoples having broadly equivalent labour force participation rates when compared to all ethnicities; 69.6% compared with 72.2% respectively.³

This means that, on average, Pacific peoples have fewer opportunities to enter (or prepare for) employment, and those who do, are paid less and have fewer opportunities for upward mobility.

THE INTERVENTION AND OUTCOMES

Tupu Aotearoa aims to assist Pacific peoples to obtain sustainable employment and/or undertake further training to increase their skills or qualifications.

We work with 20 providers to support participants with job seeking, obtaining a driver license, and post-placement support. Services also include ongoing advice, mentoring and pastoral care to help sustain their employment, training or studies.

From 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, we supported:

2,872

people to complete the programme

1,485

employment placements

1,477

training/education placements

928

young people now holding NZQA levels 1-7 qualifications

We have provided you with advice on our suggested approach for this programme going forward as part of our priorities briefing (AM029-2023/24 refers).

FUNDING PROFILE

FUNDING	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/2028
Departmental	\$5.353M	\$5.353M	\$5.353M	s9(2)(f)(iv)	
Non-Departmental	\$10.752M	\$10.752M	\$10.752M		

Funding commitments for FY2023/2024 are being finalised

1 Statistics New Zealand (2022). Ngā Tūtohu Aotearoa: Indicators. statisticsnz.shinyapps.io/wellbeingindicators/w_4f7cfd80/?page=about&subpage=main
 2 Ministry for Women (2022). The gender pay gap. <https://women.govt.nz/women-and-work/gender-pay-gap>
 3 Statistics New Zealand (2023). Labour market statistics: March. Labour market statistics: March 2023 quarter | Stats NZ

Education & Labour Market

Boosting skills and employment for confident, thriving and resilient young people

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We work with 20 providers to support participants with job seeking, obtaining a driver license, and post-placement support. Services also include ongoing advice, mentoring and pastoral care to help sustain their employment, training or studies.

From 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, we supported:



We have provided you with advice on our suggested approach for this programme going forward as part of our priorities briefing.

PROGRESS UPDATE

Tupu Aotearoa is on track to achieving training and employment outcome targets.

In quarter two, **892** clients enrolled and participated in the Tupu Aotearoa programme.

Provisional outcomes include:

- **102** clients placed into training and/or education
- **341** clients placed into employment.

CASE STUDY

A 30-year-old Samoan woman, had been living in New Zealand for over 24 years. She moved from Tauranga to Auckland in 2018 with hopes of finding better work opportunities for her and her family. She currently lives in a state-owned home in Ōtara and prior to Tupu Aotearoa relied on her benefit income of approximately \$600 per fortnight.

After receiving training through one of our Tupu Aotearoa providers, she secured full-time employment at Sky TV as a Customer Services Representative. This increased her income to \$1,500 per fortnight and she was able to move off the benefit system.

This job is the client's first full-time permanent role, and she advised that although she has held many different jobs, this one fits her parental responsibilities best, as she has a young family and it allows her the flexibility to work from home. The increase in income has significantly improved her family circumstances.

FUNDING PROFILE

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1 Statistics New Zealand (2022). Ngā Tūtohu Aotearoa: Indicators. statisticsnz.shinyapps.io/wellbeingIndicators/w/4f7cfd80/?page=about&subpage=main
 2 Ministry for Women (2022). The gender pay gap. <https://women.govt.nz/women-and-work/gender-pay-gap>
 3 Statistics New Zealand (2023). Labour market statistics: March. Labour market statistics: March 2023 quarter | Stats NZ

Excerpt – Joint Briefing: Ministry for Pacific Peoples and Ministry of Social Development to Minister for Pacific Peoples (ref B014-2024/25 – dated 6 December 2024)

The future direction of Tupu Aotearoa

Background

8. Tupu Aotearoa targets Pacific peoples who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) by supporting them to obtain sustainable employment and/or undertake further training to increase their skills or qualifications. The intent of Tupu Aotearoa is to reduce the number of Pacific peoples who are most at risk of long-term unemployment by:
 - preparing Pacific peoples who are NEET for work
 - addressing barriers to employment
 - taking a whānau and community-centred approach
 - placing NEET Pacific peoples into sustained employment
 - providing mentoring and pastoral care throughout their time in the programme.
9. Tupu Aotearoa was established in 2010 as the Pacific Employment Support Service (PESS) programme to address persistently high NEET rates for young Pacific peoples.
10. From 2010-2015, PESS focussed on supporting young Pacific peoples aged between 16 to 24 years old. In 2019, PESS was renamed Tupu Aotearoa and expanded to more regions across the country. The eligibility criteria were also revised to include all Pacific peoples aged 15 years and older who are New Zealand citizens or permanent residents and currently residing in New Zealand.

Tupu Aotearoa has been successful at moving Pacific peoples into employment or training

11. There are currently 12 Tupu Aotearoa providers across the country. Table 1 summarises the high-level outcomes the programme achieved from 2010 to 2022.

Table 1: Tupu Aotearoa achievements from 2010 to 2022

Participation	10,229 participants
Employment	4,554 employment placements 1,010 participants in sustainable employment over 12 months
Training	4,595 training placements 2,133 training qualifications obtained

Pacific peoples face unemployment rates that are consistently higher than the general population and increasing.

12. Pacific peoples are a fast-growing, young population¹ that experience more challenges engaging with education and training or finding sustained employment compared to most other population groups.
13. Data shows that around 33,600 Pacific peoples were 'underutilised' by the labour market in September 2024, an increase of 5,300 compared to last year. This includes people who were unemployed (16,200), underemployed (7,900) or considered 'just outside' the labour force (9,400).²
14. The Pacific unemployment (UE) rate increased over the last three quarters of 2024 compared to the total population. At the end of the March 2024 quarter, the Pacific UE rate was 7.4% compared to 4.4% of the total population. The latest September 2024 quarter saw the Pacific UE rate rise to 8.4% compared to 4.8% of the total population.³
15. The reasons people are NEET or experience poor long-term employment outcomes are complex, but key risk factors for Pacific peoples include skills mismatch, lower educational attainment, and the lack of opportunity to develop 'soft skills' relating to employability and obtaining work experience. Pacific peoples are also overrepresented in low wage, casual or part-time jobs that are more vulnerable to economic fluctuations.
16. Given these challenges, targeted programmes such as Tupu Aotearoa with defined interventions are critical to moving Pacific peoples into employment, education or training. Evidence from the World Bank⁴ indicates that interventions involving job search assistance and work experience, or on-the-job training, are effective at improving longer-term employment outcomes. This is particularly the case where interventions are sustained after people move into employment or training, are 'joined up' with other services, and are targeted based on known risk factors.⁵

¹ By 2048, the Pacific population in New Zealand is projected to increase by 30% to over half a million with over 50% of the Pacific population expected to be under 25 years old if current trends continue.

² [Pacific Peoples Labour Market Statistics Snapshot – September 2024](#)

³ [Labour Market Statistics Snapshot | Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment](#)

⁴ [World Bank Document, PowerPoint Presentation](#)

⁵ [Report \(educationcounts.govt.nz\)](#)