

Withheld under section 9(2)(a)

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

**Official Information Act request – Joanne Harrison**

I refer to your request dated 5 March 2017, pursuant to the Official Information Act 1982, requesting information about former Ministry of Transport employee Joanne Harrison. The full responses are set out in the Appendix.

I have withheld information where it is necessary to protect the privacy of natural persons (questions 3(a), (c) and (d)) under section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act.

In respect of the information withheld, although I recognise there is considerable interest in all aspects of Ms Harrison's employment and offending, I do not consider that the public interest in making this particular information available outweighs the reasons for withholding it.

You have the right under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act 1982 to make a complaint to the Ombudsman, whose address for contact purposes is:

The Ombudsman  
Office of the Ombudsman  
P O Box 10-152  
**WELLINGTON**

Yours sincerely

Peter Mersi  
**Chief Executive**

## Appendix

Request	Response
1. How did she become aware of the position being available - e.g: by advertisement, word of mouth, existing MOT employee, or referral by a recruitment company, etc?	I understand she became aware of the position through the "SEEK" website.
2. If Joanne Harrison was recommended to the MoT by a recruitment company:  a. who is that company?  b. how much was it paid for this placement?  c. is the MoT pursuing a refund of this fee?  d. what specific background screening checks did the recruitment company undertake for the MOT?  e. Were the results of these background screening checks submitted to the MoT in writing, and were they all positive?  f. Did the recruitment company contact any of her previous employers? What were the results of those checks?  g. is the MoT still using this recruitment company?	Joanne Harrison did not use a recruitment company.

Request	Response
<p>3. If Joanne Harrison's application for employment was instead handled internally by the MoT's own staff, could you please advise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What specific background screening checks did the MoT undertake and what was the actual result of each of these checks?</li> <li>b. Did the Ministry undertake a criminal record check? What was that result?</li> <li>c. Did the Ministry contact any of her previous employers? What were the results of those checks?</li> <li>d. Was Joanne Harrison asked to nominate any referees? Were those referees contacted? What did these referees say about Joanne Harrison?</li> <li>e. Following her suspension from the MoT, what checks did the MoT then undertake on Joanne Harrison's background and what was the result of these checks?</li> </ul>	<p>The Ministry's process at that time included contacting referees and a self-declaration of criminal offending and conflicts of interest. Ministry of Justice criminal record checks for new staff were not standard practice at the time. In terms of the results of the checks for Joanne Harrison, the information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) to protect the privacy of natural persons.</p> <p>No.</p> <p>The Ministry contacted nominated referees from previous employers. In terms of what they said, the information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) to protect the privacy of natural persons.</p> <p>The Ministry contacted three nominated referees. In terms of what they said, the information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) to protect the privacy of natural persons.</p> <p>The Ministry contacted two of the referees and verified that they were genuine. The other referee could not be contacted.</p>

Request	Response
<p>4.</p> <p>a. When did the MoT first learn Joanne Harrison had a conviction for defrauding a previous employer?</p> <p>b. How much did that fraud involve?</p> <p>c. Was the victim of that fraud ever contacted during Joanne Harrison's recruitment and did it disclose her conviction to the MoT?</p> <p>d. When and how did the MoT first learn of Joanne Harrison's other surnames of Sharp and Sidebottom?</p>	<p>In April 2016.</p> <p>The Ministry does not hold this information.</p> <p>No.</p> <p>“Sharp” - During the Ministry’s employment investigation in April 2016.  “Sidebottom” – through media reports in July 2016.</p>
<p>5. How much did Ernst &amp; Young invoice the MoT for its (actual)15-page review of the MoT's employment screening practices?</p>	<p>\$27,179.10 (including GST).</p>
<p>6. Has any MoT employee been the subject of any disciplinary action, including the withholding of bonuses or salary increments as a consequence of the MoT employing Joanne Harrison?</p>	<p>No.</p>