

# Official Information

*A help or a hindrance for the voice of New Zealand's journalists*

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# The beginning

- My story
- Depth of the problem?
- What else are we missing out on?
- Requests on a spectrum – few will see the worst issues highlighted

# Literature Review/Research Questions

- Democracy - free information
- The Danks' Committee
- Other nations
- Kiwi research - White/Price
- Experiences - journalists/officials
- Law Commission's reviews
- Ombudsman's reports

*Gap of knowledge – Why/effect/how we can help?*

# Methodology - Qualitative approach

- Two contrasting case studies
- Interviews with journalists, officials
- Issues in cases
- Issues across the board
- LIMITATIONS – Spread of problems not indicated by case study approach

# Case One -Phil Goff and the SIS

Themes this case hosts:

- Controlled release
- Incorrect redactions
- Acting within law but not spirit – is “good will” a reasonable expectation?

General themes why:

- Politicisation of the act
- Narrowed gap between departments/ministers
- Explicit/implicit pressure

# Case Two - Mammogram bus

- Consultation to deter
- Trade-offs
- Automatic release –“Illusion of transparency”
- What is a request? Sowman’s Letter

General themes why:

- Move towards restricting info

# Reoccurring features – Other case studies

- No surprises/micro managing/managing up – risk aversion
- Poor stats/no monitoring
- Moving off paper or “Yellow stickies” – Ede/Collins
- Siting on requests
- Ombudsman

# Journalistic misuse

- Public servant's feedback on journalists
  1. Fishing
  2. News gathering
  3. Weary of scandalous headlines
  4. Lack of trust on both sides/aggression



# Summary

- Still dealing with politicians – will there ever be a pure legal interpretation?
- Symptom of wider issues?
- Distance ministers/departments
- Public sector risk aversion/restricting info
- Penalties? Or cultural shifts?
- Law change needed - political self interest