

29 January 2024

File Ref: OIAPR-1274023063-24943

By email: [REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

### **Requests for information 2023-302 and 2023-308**

I refer to your request for information dated 10 December 2023, which was received by Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) on 10 December 2023. You have requested the following:

*“All complaints (including details, time etc) that have been made to GWRC regarding the odour at the Seaview Wastewater Treatment Plant, since 1 October 2023 until now. AND, any correspondence (including verbal, phone calls, virtual meetings, and written) and documentation involving staff/employees and representatives from Wellington Water, Greater Wellington Regional Council, Hutt City Council, and Veolia regarding complaints about the odour from the Seaview Wastewater Treatment Plant, since 1 October 2023 until now.*

*This should include the time complaints were made, and any correspondence between staff within and between these organisations regarding the complaints about the odour, and how to control the odour. If there has been any communication that compliance officers should delay their visits to the site of the odour complaint, or contact Veolia before attending to complaints this is intended to be within the scope of the request.”*

#### **Greater Wellington’s response follows:**

#### **Transfer of request for information 2023-308 from Wellington Water Limited**

Greater Wellington accepted transfer of your request for information from Wellington Water Limited (2023-308). This request for information was a duplicate of your request for information 2023-302 which had already been received by Greater Wellington. A response to both of your information requests is provided below.

We note that Wellington Water Limited transferred the full request to us with our acceptance. As we do not have access to Wellington Water Limited’s internal correspondence, we are not able to

provide this to you. If you wish to obtain this information, you will need to request it from Wellington Water Limited directly.

### **All complaints**

**Attachment 1** contains all the information directly received on complaints specifically relating to odour from the Seaview Wastewater Treatment Plant between 1 October 2023 and 10 December 2023. We are withholding personal identifying information in this attachment under section 7(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased natural persons.

We have considered whether the public interest in the requested information outweighs Greater Wellington's need to withhold certain aspects of the requested information. As a result, we do not consider that the public interest outweighs Greater Wellington's reason for withholding parts of the document under the grounds identified above.

Information withheld includes address numbers (but not street names), identifying names of notifiers and phone numbers.

### **Correspondence, documentation and verbal communications including phone calls, virtual meetings, and written, regarding complaints about odour**

We have undertaken a search for Seaview, Odour and Biofilter within our database and over 3, 200 entries were returned between 1 October and 10 December. Under section 14(1)(a) of the Act we are extending the time limit to respond to this part of your request on the basis that the request is for a large quantity of official information or necessitates a search through a large quantity of information and meeting the original time limit would unreasonably interfere with the operations of Greater Wellington. A response to this part of your information request will be provided to you by 26 February 2024.

### **Delay in visits or contact with Veolia prior to attending**

Our protocol is to undertake the odour assessment first and if it is offensive and objectionable, then investigate the possible sources including calling and/or visiting Veolia New Zealand Limited at Seaview Wastewater Treatment Plant to identify any obvious issues on site.

Reasons there may be a delay in attending notifications;

- the duty officer is already attending another incident within the region,
- the duty officer's travel time to the notifier's location,
- health and safety risk of attendance.

- IT issues when notifications are sent through

Undertaking odour assessments alongside Veolia and/or Wellington Water Limited staff to ensure all parties experience the same odour impact was raised by Wellington Water Limited. This is not in line with Greater Wellington protocol, as the two odour assessments serve different purposes (Compliance/enforcement vs Investigation). This approach had not been undertaken between 1 October and 10 December 2023 and Greater Wellington re-iterated this on 24 November 2023 during an online meeting between Blair Johnson (Head of wastewater contracts, Wellington Water) and Amanda O'Brien (Senior Compliance, Monitoring and Enforcement Officer) (**Attachment 2**).

On 24 November 2023 the threshold in the number of notifications before attendance to site was recommended to be increased from 1 to 2 due to the significant increase in notifications that were successive. This was based on how often officers were responding to notifications and the time in-between visits being quite minimal. Greater Wellington decided that the threshold change can ensure an effective balance in our response between Seaview Wastewater Treatment Plant odour notifications and other notifications received across the rest of the region. This threshold will be reviewed in the near future to reflect current context. The updated site-specific protocol has been provided as **Attachment 3**. This was last updated on 8 December 2023.

If you have any concerns with the decision(s) referred to in this letter, you have the right to request an investigation and review by the Ombudsman under section 27(3) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Our response to your request will be published shortly on Greater Wellington's website with your personal information removed.

Nāku iti noa, nā



**Lian Butcher**

Kaiwhakahaere Matua, Taiao | Group Manager, Environment

27 February 2024

File Ref: OIAPR-1274023063-25440

By email: [REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

### Requests for information 2023-302

I refer to your request for information dated 10 December 2023, which was received by Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) on 10 December 2023. You have requested the following:

1. *“All complaints (including details, time etc) that have been made to GWRC regarding the odour at the Seaview Wastewater Treatment Plant, since 1 October 2023 until now.*
2. *AND, any correspondence (including verbal, phone calls, virtual meetings, and written) and documentation involving staff/employees and representatives from Wellington Water, Greater Wellington Regional Council, Hutt City Council, and Veolia regarding complaints about the odour from the Seaview Wastewater Treatment Plant, since 1 October 2023 until now.*
3. *This should include the time complaints were made, and any correspondence between staff within and between these organisations regarding the complaints about the odour, and how to control the odour. If there has been any communication that compliance officers should delay their visits to the site of the odour complaint, or contact Veolia before attending to complaints this is intended to be within the scope of the request.”*

#### Greater Wellington’s response follows:

The letter sent on 29 January 2024 responded to part 1 of the request with all complaints sent through as a PDF (**Attachment 1**). Subsequently we have not provided any contact centre reporting emails as part of this request as we believe this part of the request has been provided through Attachment 1. Any other complaints received have been provided.

**Correspondence, documentation and verbal communications including phone calls, virtual meetings, and written, regarding complaints about odour.**

In response to your request for all correspondence regarding odour from Seaview WWTP to and from Wellington Water Limited (WWL), Greater Wellington (including internal), Hutt City Council (HCC), and Veolia Water New Zealand Limited (Veolia), our initial search for Seaview, Odour and Biofilter within our Greater Wellington database and over 3,200 entries were returned between 01 October 2023 and 10 December 2023.

These communications have been collated and prepared for release and we have identified one power point slide (**Attachment 4**) and 211 emails, which include attachments (**Attachment 5.1 to 5.4**, and **attachments 6-8**). Information in these attachments outside of the scope of your request has been deleted.

Correspondence in scope can be summarised as:

- Clarifying emails about odour sources and notifications about odour.
- Forwarding complaint emails to WWL for their compliance records and investigation.
- Issuing a please explain letter and WWL's response to the please explain.
- Internal emails regarding protocol and updates relating to Seaview WWTP to Greater Wellington staff.
- Media queries made to Greater Wellington
- "how odour is controlled" including emails about the odour canons and biofilter.
- Other

Meetings that occurred between the period 1 October 2023 and 10 December 2023 include:

- 26 October 2023: monthly meeting with Greater Wellington/WWL/Veolia minutes provided.
- 24 November 2023: Meeting with Blair Johnson "Seaview WWTP Odour Meeting". Meeting notes have been provided in 29 January letter response.
- 24 November 2024: Meeting Between Max Curnow and Amanda O'Brien about Site Specific Protocol (SSP) threshold. Updated SSP provided in 29 January letter response.
- 29 November 2023: Compliance, Monitoring and Enforcement fortnightly meeting: Seaview WWTP PowerPoint. Updating team on Site Specific Protocol.

- 30 November 2023: monthly meeting with Greater Wellington/WWL/Veolia minutes provided.
- 04 December 2023: Meeting between Amanda O'Brien, David Keane and Nicola Fenn to discuss Enforcement Decision Group process.
- 11 December 2023: An in-person meeting was held at WWL with Amanda O'Brien (Greater Wellington) to discuss Greater Wellington's role in compliance to WWL odour scouts between 10:30 am to 11:30 am. No specific minutes were recorded by Greater Wellington or provided to Greater Wellington. Emails correspondence about the meeting purpose has been provided.

We are withholding personal identifying information (address numbers, names of persons, phone numbers) in these attachment under section 7(2)(a) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (the Act) in order to protect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased natural persons.

We have considered whether the public interest in the requested information outweighs Greater Wellington's need to withhold certain aspects of the requested information. As a result, we do not consider that the public interest outweighs Greater Wellington's reason for withholding parts of the document under the grounds identified above.

No correspondence, within scope, has been withheld. Excluded internal correspondence from the search that was out of scope included emails about:

- Other activities (consents and compliance) that occur or will occur within the Seaview area,
- Metlink emails that relate to the Seaview suburb,
- other activities in the Region that have odour complaints (e.g. landfills),
- annual planning meetings where business addresses are listed as Seaview,
- Seaview WWTP discharges to water notifications and correspondence and;
- Administration emails, such as official information automation emails, time sheeting records and financials.

### **Verbal communications**

Many internal verbal conversations occurred within Greater Wellington across the period 1 October 2023 and 10 December 2023 relating to Seaview WWTP. Any key decision-making discussions are recorded as they occur as meetings and are provided.

Most internal verbal communications regarding Seaview WWTP odour relate to:

- Ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of staff as well as workloads, due to increased volume of notifications and duty attendance visits within and outside of working hours.

- The process of how to undertake compliance site visit with respect to the site-specific protocol to ensure everyone is completing investigations as required.
- The next steps relating to enforcement, specifically setting up the enforcement decision group.
- General conversations about how odour is produced and mitigated.

The above topics cover the information in scope of verbal communications; however, we are not able to reproduce the conversations that were had. Therefore, we are refusing this part of your request under section 17(e) of the Act on the basis the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

When refusing a request for information under section 17(e) of the Act, we are required to consider consulting the requester. In this instance, we do not consider that consulting with you would change the outcome of our decision.

**Delay in visits or contact with Veolia prior to attending**

The letter sent on 29 January 2024 responded to part 3 of the request including **Attachment 2** and **Attachment 3**. Any further information identified throughout the search has been provided.

If you have any concerns with the decision(s) referred to in this letter, you have the right to request an investigation and review by the Ombudsman under section 27(3) of the Act.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Our response to your request will be published shortly on Greater Wellington's website with your personal information removed.

Nāku iti noa, nā



**Lian Butcher**

Kaiwhakahaere Matua, Taiao | Group Manager, Environment