
BEGINS

“Councils Cagey on Corporate Remuneration”

No matter what the law says, most Councils have refused to provide public information on senior management salaries in a recent research study.

A report released by Council Watch shows the median salary for a senior manager of a local authority at between \$150–160,000 (about \$3,000 per week before tax). However many Councils either ignored an official request to provide the information, or outright refused to do so citing reasons of “privacy”.

The research aimed to provide the public of New Zealand with a benchmark of how well senior public servants in the local government sector are being paid. This would enable a comparison with countries who have similar systems, such as Australia. With the current debate over the ‘brain drain’ across the Tasman the information was considered to be in the public interest.

Council Watch spokesperson and Local Democracy Advisor, Jim Candiliotis, is disappointed in the response from Councils.

“We requested the information and 19 refused to provide it, 15 gave us something but not the information that was requested and 18 didn’t even respond. That leaves 32 (38%) out of 84 Councils who were willing to front up in public and say what they paid their senior managers.”

Mr Candiliotis is concerned that nearly two-thirds of Councils in New Zealand did not want to admit how much they paid their senior staff – even though they were asked to provide the totals “in bands of \$10,000”, which is consistent with best practise in the state sector.

“I believe this research has uncovered a distinct lack of professionalism and education amongst some of the more junior Council officers in our local government sector,” says Mr Candiliotis, “Obviously, the job of answering official requests for information is not handled directly by the Chief Executive Officer, however the law does make that person legally responsible for actioning such a request.

“I’m not proposing that the CEOs have anything to hide or be ashamed-of in terms of how much they pay their senior staff. But it does invite such thought when so many Councils are unwilling to release the information. I honestly believe this is merely incompetence.

“As such, I’m calling for a review by the Minister of Local Government on how Council officers are trained in this country. It’s disappointing that the general public cannot expect to receive access to information promised to them by law.”

The research – which is available online at www.councilwatch.org.nz – is not statistically robust due to the lack of cooperation by Councils, but does highlight a need for Councils to train their staff better in dealing with information requests and in the understanding of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

ENDS

About Council Watch

Council Watch is based on the belief that strong communities come from improving leadership, developing networks and improving the standard of democracy at a local level. Council Watch’s role is to support residents’ groups, educate the wider public on their rights and responsibilities, and provide unbiased research on the state of the local government sector in New Zealand.

Contact: Jim Candiliotis, (027) 443 5614, help@councilwatch.org.nz. Further information is available on our website at www.councilwatch.org.nz.

What do these people have to hide?

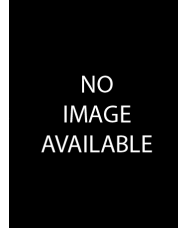
The following Chief Executives did not respond to our request. These same CEOs confer power to their officers or contractors to give you a parking ticket. We ask each one this simple question: if we can't ignore your parking bylaws, what makes you so special that you can ignore our official information request?



Peter Winder
Auckland Regional Council



Gary Murphy
Buller District Council



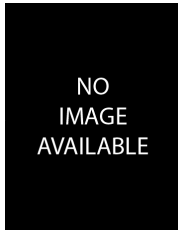
Colin Wright
Carterton District Council



Ross McLeod
Hastings District Council



David Ward
Horowhenua District Council



Glen Innes
Mackenzie District Council



Neil Taylor
Napier City Council



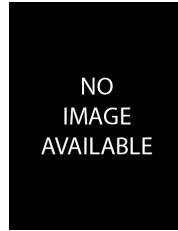
John Brockies
North Shore City Council



Vaughan Payne
Opotiki District Council



Graeme Martin
Otago Regional Council



Dave Clibbery
Otorohanga District Council



Peter Guerin
Rotorua District Council



David Adamson
Southland District Council



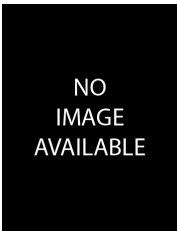
Paul Wylie
Tasman District Council



Stephen Town
Tauranga City Council



Max Pederson
Upper Hutt Council



Chris Ryan
Waitomo District Council



Kevin Ross
Wanganui District Council