


24 April 2024

File Ref: OIAPR-1274023063-26072



Tēnā koe 

Request for information 2024-056

I refer to your request for information dated 28 March 2024, which was received by Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) on 28 March 2024. You have requested the following:

“Please provide for the 2023 calendar year:

1. *A list of all payments from the Council group (i.e. including any CCOs) to Taituarā*
2. *For each payment:*
 - a. *the date, invoice number, and what the payment was for* and*
 - b. *whether it was recovered (or deducted from the pay) from the relevant employee enjoying the membership or services related to the same.*

Given the nature of Taituarā as a membership organisation – in effect the employment union for local government managers – if membership dues are not recovered or deducted, please provide:

- a. *the reasoning (if any) for not deducting the amounts (i.e. Why should ratepayers pay for a private organisation/benefit?) and*
- b. *whether the Council does this for any other employment union or professional/networking association. If so, which ones?*

If the Council considers that the membership for Council officers is as part of their role at the Council (and therefore not for private benefit) please provide this information and explain how Taituarā is not therefore treated as a CCO under s 6(1) of the Local Government Act 2002 for the purposes of the Council group’s statutory reporting.”

Greater Wellington's response follows:

Attachment 1 contains a list of all payments with the information as requested as per your points 1 and 2. Please note that none of these payments were recovered from the relevant employee or deducted from their pay. Council Controlled Organisations (CCOs) have not made any payments to Taituarā.

Taituarā is not a registered union, but a membership network and play no role in the negotiation of employment contracts or employment relations for any group or individual. Taituarā is the professional body for local government, managers and staff.

Greater Wellington payments to Taituarā relate to the following areas:

- Training and professional development opportunities
- Leadership development
- Membership fees
- Local government topics – Long Term Plan training, webinars, strategic finance forum, etc.

Providing staff these opportunities, equips them with training and knowledge to perform their roles effectively. We view this as standard practice for any reputable employer. It's generally uncommon for a council or any employer to expect employees to cover such costs, as it goes against common industry practice.

Included in the attachment are invoices relating to the payment of Taituarā memberships. A full membership currently costs \$275 per year plus GST. It is common practice in New Zealand for employers to include payments of membership fees for professional bodies that relate to the employee's role and allow them to keep up to date with current information and statutory compliance. It also gives them access to draw on the network's training, knowledge and skills.

Greater Wellington makes similar payments to Chartered Accountants Australia New Zealand (CAANZ), New Zealand Association for Environment Education (NZAEE), Engineering NZ, Chartered Institute of Water Environment Management (CIWEM), Institute of Directors, NZ Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia.

Taituarā, also known as the Society of Local Government Managers (SOLGM), falls outside the scope of council-controlled organisations owing to its legal designation as an incorporated society and its nonprofit nature. As an incorporated society, Taituarā doesn't have shareholders or ownership structure. This means it falls outside of the definition of a CCO as defined in section 6 (1) the Local Government Act 2002.

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



Alison Trustrum-Rainey

Kaiwhakahaere Matua, Pūtea me ngā Tūraru | Group Manager Finance and Risk

PROACTIVE RELEASE