



29 September 2025

A.C.G. Heath

s7(2)(a)

Tēnā koe,

**Request for Information – Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act (LGOIMA) 1987**

We refer to your official information request dated 3 September 2025, seeking information on legal costs relating to the removal of the Apirana Ngata supplement and subsequent legal proceedings. Specifically, you requested:

- 1. The total cost (if any) that Council spent on those initial legal advices before legal proceedings against the Chief Executive and the Council were received.*
- 2. What the Council subsequently spent on legal fees and Court costs preparing to defend those formal claims, including the pursuing of a declaratory judgement and reaching a Joint Memorandum advising settlement of the proceeding and any costs incurred in the filing of the discontinuance thereafter.*
- 3. What (if any) costs were recovered from the Plaintiffs.*

**Answer:**

Council received draft legal proceedings from the Free Speech Union on 2 December 2024 and were given 5 working days before they were filed. As such, there was very limited time to seek and receive external legal advice before proceedings were filed on 9 December.

The first legal invoice we received was for the period 2 December to 17 December 2024, for \$4,800 + GST. However, that amount included drafting a statement of defence and a letter to the Free Speech Union, noting their failure to provide initial disclosure (amongst other things).

The total legal fees incurred by Council were \$79,125.46 +GST. The total court filing and hearing fees were \$975.

No costs were recovered from the plaintiffs. As part of the settlement, each party bore their own costs.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this response. Information about how to make a complaint is available at: [Office of the Ombudsman - Complaints](#), or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response to your information request may be published on Hutt City Council's website: [Proactive releases - Hutt City Council](#).

Ngā mihi nui



Rebekah van der Splinter

**Senior Advisor, Official Information and Privacy**