

3 December 2021

Peter Hughes
Te Tumu Whakarae mō Te Kawa Mataaho
Public Service Commissioner

Tēnā koe Peter

Thank you for your letter of 19 November 2021 regarding the handling of a disclosure by Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities concerning a sponsored article.

The Board Chair and I provide the attached response to you on behalf of Kāinga Ora, which includes the information you have requested along with a timeline of relevant events and related documents.

We are acutely aware of our responsibilities as a Public Service agency and these responsibilities are taken very seriously. Our employees are made aware of the requirement to be politically impartial when they start with us and are reminded of these obligations regularly, including prior to and during the pre-election period.

While the article in question was politically neutral in nature, one of our people made a personal judgement call that the story was about a Hobsonville Point community response and was being published prior to Arena Williams' candidacy being announced. Reporting lines and responsibilities have changed significantly since the publication of the article, with more robust approval processes now in place, and my view is that we would not make the same decision now or in the future.

This situation should have been handled better, and as Kāinga Ora takes its responsibilities around political neutrality very seriously, the people involved have been reminded about their obligations under the Public Service Code of Conduct. This was done via an in-person meeting and in addition, targeted training was given to this team by the Government Relations Manager.

We acknowledge that some of the emails from a Kāinga Ora employee which were released publicly used language that was not acceptable or of a professional standard. This has been managed directly with the person involved and is not indicative of the wider culture or practices at Kāinga Ora. I have personally expressed my disappointment to the person involved.

Everyone involved, and Kāinga Ora as an organisation, has learned from this matter, and applied these learnings to prevent this type of situation from happening again. I am confident that our employees uphold the Public Service Commission's standards of integrity and conduct and that we maintain political neutrality.

If you would like to discuss our response or require further information, please contact me.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A McKenzie'.

Andrew McKenzie
Chief Executive

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M Gosche'.

Vui Mark Gosche
Board Chair