



3 May 2023

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Ref: OIA-2022/23-0743

Dear [REDACTED]

**Official Information Act request relating to Material that relates to Bethlehem College and LGBT students**

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 31 March 2023. You requested:

*Under the Official Information Act 1982, I request a copy of the following information:*

*1. All briefings, aides-memoire, memos, Cabinet papers, documents, reports (including weekly reports), meeting agendas and minutes, and correspondence (including emails, texts, and other electronic messages), since 1 January 2022 that relate or refer to Bethlehem College and/or Bethlehem College Limited and/or the Christian Education Trust. Please note this includes:*

- a. internal communications, including emails and internal memos;*
- b. any draft or final documents or reports compiled (including all files and findings used to compile them) as a result of or in relation to any review, evaluation or investigation into Bethlehem College; and/or*
- c. anything that relates or refers to Bethlehem College's Statement of Special Character and/or Statement of Belief and/or complaints and/or rainbow or LGBT students and/or sexuality or sexual orientation and/or gender identity and/or religious beliefs, positions or policies.*

*2. All correspondence (including emails, texts and all other electronic messages) since 1 January 2020 that relates or refers to Bethlehem College and/or Bethlehem College Limited and/or the Christian Education Trust, and Bethlehem College's Statement of Special Character and/or Statement of Belief, and/or complaints, and/or LGBT students.*

*a. Please note this includes correspondence to or from groups or individuals who are outside government, including Gender Dynamix, Rainbow Youth, Gordon (Gordy) Lockhart, and/or Shaneel Lal.*

*3. All briefings, aides-memoire, memos, Cabinet papers, documents, reports (including weekly reports), meeting agendas and minutes, and correspondence (including emails, texts, and other electronic messages), since 1 January 2022, that relate or refer to state-integrated schools and/or Christian schools and/or religious schools and:*

- a. s127(1)(b) and/or s127(1)(c) of the Education and Training Act 2020; and/or*
- b. Rainbow and/or LGBT students and/or sexuality or sexual orientation and/or gender identity.”*

On 13 April 2023 I advised that your request was partially transferred to the Ministry of Education. Regarding the remainder of your request, I can advise that the Department of the

Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) has identified four documents within scope of your request titled:

- Ministry of Health Disinformation Summary – June 2022
- Ministry of Health Disinformation Report – June 2022
- Reporting of online harms and threats against the Covid-19 Response: Fortnightly Update, 11 July 2022
- NZ Police Scanning Report

Some information is withheld from the document titled 'NZ Police Scanning Report' under the following section of the Act:

- Section 6(c), to protect the maintenance of the law

These documents are released to you via extract in Attachment A. No further information has been identified as in scope of your request held by DPMC.

DPMC receive general information environment reports from other agencies, from which these extracts appeared. However, the Disinformation Project Report was specifically commissioned to address COVID-19 misinformation, therefore the extract relating to Bethlehem was disregarded as it fell outside the scope of COVID-19 related material.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

Yours sincerely



Chris Gianos  
**Head of Operations and Risk  
Strategy, Governance and Engagement**

## Extract from Ministry of Health Disinformation Summary – June 2022

### LGBTQ

There are numerous articles relating to LGBTQ issue in the last month, most of which are critical of the LGBTQ movement<sup>24 25</sup>. This is likely partly due to June being Pride Month. More recently, following mainstream news sources publishing articles relating to anti-LGBTQ statements being published by Bethlehem College<sup>26 27</sup>, several disinformation sources have published articles defending Bethlehem College<sup>28</sup>, often mentioning the importance of free speech<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.thedailyexaminer.co.nz/school-gender-curriculum-strongly-rejected-poll/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://dailytelegraph.co.nz/opinion/involving-kids-in-drag-queen-shows-is-deviance-not-pride/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.stuff.co.nz/bay-of-plenty/300613838/school-told-trans-student-god-doesnt-make-mistakes--then-they-tried-to-kill-themselves>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/bay-of-plenty-times/news/taurangas-bethlehem-college-criticised-for-discriminatory-marriage-belief/ACKCSXMNTDGQ5CRCLF7AMTWZXY/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.thedailyexaminer.co.nz/bethlehem-college-responds-to-attacks-on-biblical-adherence/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://waikanaewatch.org/2022/06/17/from-the-free-speech-union-the-leftist-media-attacks-bethlehem-colleges-religious-teaching/>

## Extract from Ministry of Health Disinformation Report June 2022

### Non-Covid Related

There are **numerous articles relating to LGBT issues** in the last month, most of which are critical of the LGBT movement<sup>7,8</sup>. This is likely partly due to June being Pride Month. More recently, following mainstream news sources publishing articles relating to anti-LGBT statements being published by Bethlehem College<sup>9,10</sup>, several disinformation sources have published articles defending Bethlehem College<sup>11</sup>, often mentioning the importance of free speech<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.thedailyexaminer.co.nz/school-gender-curriculum-strongly-rejected-poll/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://dailytelegraph.co.nz/opinion/involving-kids-in-drag-queen-shows-is-deviance-not-pride/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.stuff.co.nz/bay-of-plenty/300613838/school-told-trans-student-god-doesnt-make-mistakes--then-they-tried-to-kill-themselves>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/bay-of-plenty-times/news/taurangas-bethlehem-college-criticised-for-discriminatory-marriage-belief/ACKCSXMNTDGQ5CRCLF7AMTWZXY/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.thedailyexaminer.co.nz/bethlehem-college-responds-to-attacks-on-biblical-adherence/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://waikanaewatch.org/2022/06/17/from-the-free-speech-union-the-leftist-media-attacks-bethlehem-colleges-religious-teaching/>

## Extract from Reporting of online harms and threats against the Covid-19 Response: Fortnightly Update, 11 July 2022. Produced by The Disinformation Project

### Queerphobia<sup>13</sup>

The publicity around Bethlehem College in Tauranga<sup>14</sup> and burning of Rainbow Youth<sup>15</sup> continue to provide narrative frames about LGBTQ+ people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In the last fortnight, an Auckland-based misinformation producer whose main platform is Facebook attacked the visibility of LGBTQ+ people in public life, saying:

“I am so glad that New Zealand has not stooped as low as the United States when it comes to children and sexual ideology. This seems crazy to me that people are okay

with children being around hyper sexualised environments. I would love to have some LGBTQ members on the podcast with me to talk about the difference between

celebrating ourselves and where the lines should be when it comes to children. If you would like to join me and chat then let's sit down for an open and honest conversation."

Another Auckland-based producer, mainly present on Telegram, was motivated by Spark's new campaign aiming to create inclusion for non-binary people<sup>16</sup> has attacked non-binary people. He claims Spark's campaign is "using [minorities'] stories to create falsehoods and distort social realities" which will damage the "great nation". His original post is shared into over 25 Telegram channels.

A Christchurch-based disinformation producer active on Facebook and YouTube strategically and intentionally misappropriates a Biblical passage (Pride goes before destruction, Proverbs 16:18), thus targeting Pride and LGBTQ+ communities as 'sin'. The PM's attendance at a Pride festival from years ago is highlighted, drawing her into the 'sin of Pride'.

In June, 'online' harms and discrimination against the Queer community<sup>17</sup> became a real display of violence with the burning of Rainbow Youth offices in Tauranga.<sup>18</sup> Safety, and feelings of safety, for the LGBTQ+ community are placed at risk every time dangerous, hateful, and harmful rhetoric is posited against them.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>13</sup> TDP is using 'queerphobia' as an umbrella term to describe harms against members of the LGBTQ+ community.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/bay-of-plenty-times/news/taurangas-bethlehem-college-criticised-for-discriminatory-marriage-belief/ACKCSXMNTDGQ5CRCLF7AMTWZXY/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/469221/rainbow-youth-auranga-drop-in-centre-destroyed-in-suspicious-fire>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.spark.co.nz/online/beyondbinarycode/about/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/bay-of-plenty-times/news/taurangas-bethlehem-college-criticised-for-discriminatory-marriage-belief/ACKCSXMNTDGQ5CRCLF7AMTWZXY/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/469221/rainbow-youth-auranga-drop-in-centre-destroyed-in-suspicious-fire>

<sup>19</sup> For more, read TDP researcher Kayli Taylor's short piece on hate speech:

<https://thedisinproject.org/2022/06/18/hate-speech-in-aotearoa-new-zealand-reflecting-and-resisting/>

## Extract from NZ Police Scanning Report: Preliminary Analysis

### Anti-rainbow community

61. Tauranga's Bethlehem College (Bay of Plenty District) was recently criticised for their belief that marriage is between a man and woman. Parents are required to agree to tick boxes that confirm this belief underpins part of the school's charter.<sup>173</sup> In addition, current and former students have alleged they have experienced homophobia, sexism and abuse whilst attending the college.<sup>174</sup> On 10 June, a student at the college was allegedly hit in the head with a piece of fruit while partaking in the international Day of Silence, in which students take a form of silence to call attention to the silencing effect of bullying, name-calling and harassment against the rainbow community in schools. On 13 June, Bethlehem College launched an investigation after a group of students who participated in the Day of Silence allegedly received death threats and verbal attacks.<sup>175,176</sup> On 11 June an activist within the rainbow community created a petition, "Launch an Independent Investigation into the Abuse at Bethlehem College" as at 0829hrs 23 June, it has 7319 signatures.<sup>177</sup> On 13 June, a defamatory email was sent to the employer and colleagues of a

Tauranga rainbow community advocate after they spoke in the Bay of Plenty Times Weekend newspaper against Bethlem College

<sup>173</sup> <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/tauranga-bethlehem-college-criticised-for-discriminatory-marriage-belief/ACKCSXMNTDGQ5CRCLF7AMTWZXY/> retrieved 22 June 2022 at 1244hrs

<sup>174</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/p/CesSlaiPMAY/> retrieved 22 June 2022 at 1245hrs

<sup>175</sup> <https://www.stuff.co.nz/bay-of-plenty/300611407/school-launch-investigation-after-alleged-threats-made-to-students-supporting-lgbtqia-community> retrieved 22 June 2022 at 1348hrs

<sup>176</sup> s6(c)

<sup>177</sup> <https://www.change.org/p/launch-an-independent-investigation-into-the-abuse-at-bethlehem-college> retrieved 23 June 2022 at 0829hrs

Released under the Official Information Act 1982