

30 October 2023

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Official information Request: SWDC Workshops

I am writing to you in response to your request received 24 October 2023 for information relating to workshops.

Will the SWDC consider making changes to closed workshops on the basis of this opinion?

<https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/news/chief-ombudsman-calls-council-workshops-be-open-default>

We have assessed your request under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA). I have received information to provide the following response:

We have already made a shift towards more open and transparent approach to council meetings, workshops, and information. This has included the newly implemented Proactive Release Policy. We already record workshops where the format and venue allow, file presentations, and note attendance of elected members. The option for open workshops is always considered and the decision to be in closed session is given appropriate regard. Councillors are given clear advice that workshops are not for the purpose of making decisions, but they can be *“an efficient use of time, in order to convey information which may be voluminous and complex to elected members, and for elected members to give council officials advice to focus their efforts on the range of tenable options. This prevents time and energy being wasted on options that aren’t realistic.”*

The report contains a number of recommendations and comments. We will endeavour to take the time to read through the full report over the coming months and assess how we are performing against the recommendations and what actions could be taken to improve transparency.

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 at <https://swdc.govt.nz/lgoima-proactive-release/>, with your personal information removed.

You have a right to request a review by the Ombudsman on this response. Further information about this process can be found on <https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/what-ombudsman-can-help/complaints-about-government-agencies/how-make-complaint> or email info@ombudsman.parliament.nz

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amanda Bradley', written in a cursive style.

Amanda Bradley
General Manager, Democracy and Engagement Team