



30 June 2026

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 12 May 2026, requesting information about the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry)'s contracts and funding arrangements for New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) with Deaf Aotearoa Holding Ltd.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision on each part of your request set out separately below.

Please note, the Ministry holds two contracts with Deaf Aotearoa: one is specifically contracted by Disability Support Services (DSS) for the provision of services within their remit and the other is a contract with all of MSD for interpreting services for Work and Income clients and/or other MSD business units (including DSS).

For context, in September 2024, DSS transitioned from Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People, to sit within the Ministry as part of wider changes to stabilise and strengthen the disability support system. Whaikaha continues to have a stewardship and policy role across the disability system, while the Ministry is now responsible for the delivery and administration of DSS.

- 1. The end date of the most recent contract for NZSL community interpreting services between MSD and Deaf Aotearoa / iSign (Deaf Aotearoa Holdings Ltd).*

The contract between the Ministry and Deaf Aotearoa (DA) for client interpreting services expires on 31 August 2026.

The contract between DSS and DA for interpreting services expires on 30 June 2026.

- 2. Whether that contract has been extended or rolled over without going to open tender, and if so, on how many occasions this has occurred and when.*

To date, the contract between the Ministry and DA has had one extension of two months to ensure continued service provision while undertaking a competitive tender process.

The contract between DSS and DA has been varied seven times. The contract has not been to open tender.

3. The current contract end date, including any extension or variations and respective periods.

The table attached in **Appendix One** has the variation details of the Ministry and DSS's contracts with DA. As mentioned above in question 2, the contract between MSD and DA has been extended once, and the contract between DSS and DA has been varied seven times.

4. Whether MSD intends to publicly tender this contract at expiry, and if so, the anticipated timeframe for doing so.

The contract between the Ministry and DA will be competitively tendered in late June to all suppliers on the New Zealand Sign Language sub-category of the Face-to-Face Interpreting Services syndicated agreement. I understand that you were informed of MSD's intent to release a tender opportunity via Weka and were provided with instructions on how to do so via email on 17 June 2026.

The contract between DSS and DA will not be publicly tendered at expiry (30 June 2026). While the transition of DSS to the Ministry occurred in September 2024, the work to respond to the Independent Review and the Link Consulting Review of DSS commissioning and capability has required a sustained period of implementation. In particular, strengthening commercial and contract management practices has involved a comprehensive reassessment of existing provider arrangements. As a result, DSS is currently reviewing and re-scoping all of its provider contracts, alongside progressing longer-term planning for disability services, including future procurement pathways and timeframes.

5. The scope of services covered under the contract, including any specified service types, regions, or populations and value of the contract.

Provision of NZSL Interpreting Services across the Ministry's workplaces includes regional sites, national offices, and online meetings as required. Services are typically delivered Monday to Friday, 8am to 5 pm, with additional support available on request.

The value of the contract is withheld under section 9(2)(j) of the Act to enable the Ministry to carry on, without prejudice or disadvantage, negotiations (including commercial and industrial negotiations), particularly in the context of the upcoming competitive tender process. The greater public interest is in ensuring that government agencies can continue to negotiate without prejudice.

The scope of the interpreting services across DSS is outlined in the publicly available service specification: www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/assets/Deaf-Aotearoa-Service-Specs-for-the-Website-V31.pdf.

The service specification requires the provider to deliver services nationwide to eligible individuals within available resources. The specification includes the provision of Disability Information and Advisory Services (DIAS) and Needs Assessment Service Coordination (NASC). The Provider will provide fair and

equitable access to services nationally. The estimated value of the contract for the period from April 2018 to June 2026 is \$27,300,000.

6. *Whether MSD has any other contracts, funding agreements, or grant arrangements with Deaf Aotearoa / iSign (Deaf Aotearoa Holdings Ltd) beyond NZSL interpreter services, including but not limited to employment services, disability support, advice, community programmes, or any other MSD business unit, and if so, the nature, value, and current end dates of those arrangements.*

The Ministry (including DSS) has no other contracts, funding agreements, or grant arrangements to support our service delivery or internal business needs.

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with my decision on your request, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

pp. 

Anna Graham
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services

Appendix One

Table One: Variation details for contract between DSS and Deaf Aotearoa.

Contract Number	Client	Provider	Contract Period	Comments
350	Ministry of Social Development	Deaf Aotearoa New Zealand Incorporated	05/07/2023-30/06/2026	
350 (Var. #1)	Ministry of Social Development	Deaf Aotearoa New Zealand Incorporated	01/07/2026-31/08/2026	Extended 2 months to 31 August 2026
359933-01	Disability Support Services	Deaf Aotearoa New Zealand Incorporated	01/04/2019-30/06/2020	Extended 1 year to 2020
359933-02	Disability Support Services	Deaf Aotearoa New Zealand Incorporated	01/07/2020-30/06/2021	Extended 1 year to 2021
359933-03	Disability Support Services	Deaf Aotearoa New Zealand Incorporated	01/07/2020-30/06/2021	Price change
359933-04	Disability Support Services	Deaf Aotearoa New Zealand Incorporated	01/07/2021-30/06/2024	Extended 3 years to 2024
359933-05	Disability Support Services	Deaf Aotearoa New Zealand Incorporated	01/07/2022-30/06/2024	Price change
359933-06	Disability Support Services	Deaf Aotearoa New Zealand Incorporated	01/07/2023-30/06/2024	Price change
359933-07 (Current)	Disability Support Services	Deaf Aotearoa New Zealand Incorporated	01/07/2024-30/06/2026	Extended 2 years to 2026. Extension was approved by exemption