



1 September 2020



Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your emails of 14 and 17 July to the Ministry of Education requesting the following information:

1. *Any correspondence that the Ministry of Education has received in relation to the operations of Student Horizons Limited or the owner of that business Jamie Wansey between 1 April 2020 to the present day*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

Like every sector, education continues to be challenged by the impacts of COVID-19 with one of those areas being schools trips involving international travel. We have great sympathy for those schools and students whose travel plans will have been affected by this global pandemic and appreciate this is a challenging time for students and their families.

As schools are self-governing through their Board of Trustees, they are ultimately responsible for all decisions around the funding and contracting of school trips and, in this instance, managing the consequences of not being able to complete any travel. The Ministry provides guidelines for schools organising international travel insurance, including requirements for insurance cover, which you can access here:

education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/School/Supporting-students/Student-Wellbeing/OrganisingInternationalGroupVisit.pdf

We cannot, however, direct schools to follow the guidelines we provide. We are also not legislated or funded to provide reimbursements for payments and deposits lost as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In trying to determine if there were any other opportunities for recourse for affected schools and families, we contacted the Commerce Commission. The Commerce Commission has advised it is not currently investigating Student Horizons. The Commission confirmed that while it has received a number of complaints about Student Horizons to date, from the information provided, it has not identified any false or misleading representations. The Commission has guidance available on its website which highlights that a consumer's right to a refund depends on the terms and conditions agreed to at the time of purchase. When a contract outlines what happens when events outside of the parties' control (like a pandemic) mean the service cannot be provided, then those terms apply.

You can read the Commerce Commission's guidance on its website https://comcom.govt.nz/data/assets/pdf_file/0019/214_750/COVID-19-Disrupted-travel-events-and-trade-guidance-15-April-2020.pdf

Your request

There are 28 documents in scope of your request, consisting of 14 emails and 14 email attachments. These are detailed for you in **Appendix A**, which lists each document and our release decision on each. Some information has been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act, to protect the privacy of natural persons. I have identified no public interest considerations sufficient to outweigh the need to withhold that information.

Please note, the Ministry now proactively publishes responses under the Act on our website. As such, we may publish this response on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.

Thank you again for your email. You have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review this decision. You can do this by writing to info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Nāku noa, nā



Katrina Casey
Deputy Secretary
Sector Enablement and Support