

19 March 2026

██████████
C/- ██████████
Sent via email to ██████████

Request for Official Information LG26-0050 - Media Budgets

Dear ██████████,

Thank you for your request for information held by the Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC). On 19 February 2026 you requested the following information under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA):

- 1. How are advertising and media budgets managed and decided by the QLDC? Please supply the job titles of people involved and the approval processes involved including any thresholds on spending - for example spending limits or delegated authorities by limit or manager.**
- 2. Please supply how much money QLDC has spent with different media publications over the last two years - separated by publication and amount spent.**
- 3. Does QLDC have a procurement policy for media spend - please supply details and a copy of this.**
- 4. Does the law still require certain notices to be published in print as opposed to digital format? Please supply details.**
- 5. Please provide the approximate, or exact, if possible, split between statutory notices and marketing / feedback / discretionary media spend.**
- 6. What is the exact cost of publishing QLDC's Let's Talk [Kōrero Mai] content in local newspapers?**
- 7. Has QLDC's media spend been put out to competitive tender? Details please.**
- 8. What measures does QLDC use to validate the circulation, reach and engagement of the media channels being used and is this the primary criteria used in making media procurement decisions?**
- 9. Who at QLDC has the main oversight of media budgets and strategy?**

QLDC RESPONSE

In response to your request, we consulted with the QLDC Communications and Engagement Team, the QLDC Procurement Team and the QLDC Finance Team.

Decision to release information

- 1. How are advertising and media budgets managed and decided by the QLDC? Please supply the job titles of people involved and the approval processes involved including any thresholds on spending - for example spending limits or delegated authorities by limit or manager.**

Staff members with appropriate financial delegations can approve advertising spend in accordance with their authorised limits. Details of delegated authority levels, including the relevant job titles and approval thresholds, are set out in the [QLDC Register of Delegations](#) (refer from page 85).

- 2. Please supply how much money QLDC has spent with different media publications over the last two years - separated by publication and amount spent.**

The table below sets out QLDC's spending with different media publications over the last two full financial years, separated by publication and amount spent.

Publication	Financial Year 2023/24 (NZD, excluding GST)	Financial Year 2024/25 (NZD, excluding GST)
Allied Press Limited Otago Daily Times	170,662.37	221,190.48
Lakes Weekly Bulletin	35,508.00	36,831.00
The Loop Arrowtown	\$795.00	974.00
Schistrock Media Limited	6,243.00	9,181.00
Stuff Limited Previously Fairfax New Zealand Limited	14,198.99	23,973.81
NZME Publishing Limited	31,111.29	28,386.58
Mediaworks Radio Limited	34,455.28	42,134.35
Mediaworks trading as Mediaworks Outdoor Limited (includes bus back advertising)	11,680.00	2,740.00

- 3. Does QLDC have a procurement policy for media spend - please supply details and a copy of this.**

Council's approach to procurement for media spend is to prioritise publications that are included within the [All of Government \(AoG\) media spend contract](#). The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) has undertaken a competitive procurement process and established AoG contracts that cover the majority of the media market. This allows QLDC to take advantage of discounted rates for its media spend.

Council is currently reviewing its media spend arrangements ahead of the 2026-2027 financial year. Please find attached [QLDC's procurement policy](#) and [guidelines](#). Together these documents define a framework of essential considerations when planning, sourcing and managing future procurement.

4. Does the law still require certain notices to be published in print as opposed to digital format? Please supply details.

Yes. A range of legislative requirements apply, including:

- Matters notified under the Reserves Act 1977 (i.e., Reserve Management Plans, proposals to grant a lease on reserve land, selling reserve land, etc.)
- Notification of disposal of Abandoned Vehicles (Local Government Act 1974)
- Temporary Road closures for events (Local Government Act 1974).
- Alcohol licenses (Sale and supply of Alcohol Regulations 2013)
- District Plan notifications (Resource Management Act 1991)
- Meeting notifications (Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987) noting there is some flexibility if timing is short.
- Notification of dog registration fees (Dog Control Act 1996).

5. Please provide the approximate, or exact, if possible, split between statutory notices and marketing / feedback / discretionary media spend.

Please find below the statutory notices and marketing spend for the last two financial years, 2023/2024 and 2024/2025.

Category	Total Spend Financial Year 2023/24 (NZD, excluding GST)	Total Spend Financial Year 2024/25 (NZD, excluding GST)
Statutory Notices	91,116.88	144,607
Marketing	73,009.45	68,778

Resource Consent Notifications have been excluded from the statutory notice total as they are cost recoverable. The statutory notice costs are also not limited to the *Wānaka Sun* and *Mountain Scene*, as some notices are placed in other publications, including the *Otago Daily Times*, *Southland Times*, and *The Press*.

Marketing spend relates specifically to the promotion of Council sport and recreation facilities and programmes across the district and includes printing, signage, promotional material and advertising across print, digital and radio channels. Some marketing activity promotes programmes and facilities that generate revenue (i.e. Alpine Health and Fitness, Aqualand Swim School); however, the primary purpose is to support community health and wellbeing through increasing participation.

6. What is the exact cost of publishing QLDC's Let's Talk [Kōrero Mai] content in local newspapers?

The four-page display advertorial is published six times per year in the *Mountain Scene* and *Wānaka Sun*, in line with the publication of QLDC's ratepayer newsletter *Let's Talk Kōrero Mai* (formerly *Scuttlebutt*). QLDC adopted this approach in April 2024 as a way to reduce the print and distribution costs associated with producing the 24-page magazine format newsletter. Previously, the magazine was distributed as an insert in these publications.

The cost of publishing QLDC's *Let's Talk Kōrero Mai* content in these publications (both part of the Allied Press network) is as follows:

Publication	Cost per publication (NZD)
Mountain Scene	5,100
Wānaka Sun	2,128

Advertising revenue of \$31,498.87 (including GST) was generated between 2023 and 2025 through the publication, which helps offset the associated print and distribution costs.

Please note that this is only one part of the distribution strategy for *Let's Talk Kōrero Mai*. The publication is also distributed via email to subscribers, promoted through social media, published on the QLDC website, and provided as hard copies to out-of-town ratepayers.

7. Has QLDC's media spend been put out to competitive tender? Details please.

Council's strategy is to prioritise publications that are included within the AoG media spend contracts as outlined. The MBIE has already undertaken a competitive procurement process and established AoG contracts that cover the majority of the market. QLDC is therefore able to utilise these MBIE AoG contracts rather than running a separate tender process.

8. What measures does QLDC use to validate the circulation, reach and engagement of the media channels being used and is this the primary criteria used in making media procurement decisions?

There are limited options available to place statutory notices in print media. For more general promotional campaigns or project specific communications, QLDC considers the audience, the subject and the wide range of channels available to achieve communication objectives.

Importantly media spend is one part of the broader communications planning process. Often, the use of QLDC's own channels is the most cost-effective way to reach a broad audience. Some projects require a very targeted approach including letter drops, in-situ signage, email campaigns or more targeted social media. The key metric is to get the best possible outcome at the lowest possible cost to the ratepayer.

QLDC has also introduced a standard question to consultation and engagement surveys asking how submitters heard about the opportunity to participate. This will help us to build a broader picture of where people are accessing information and consider any potential gaps based on demographics of submitters.

9. Who at QLDC has the main oversight of media budgets and strategy?

The QLDC Engagement and Communications Manager or Director Democracy Services approve all formal public notices or promotional campaign material ahead of publication.

As highlighted in our response to item 1 of your request, specific budgets are managed directly by the relevant line or project manager.

Decision to refuse information

5. Please provide the approximate, or exact, if possible, split between statutory notices and marketing / feedback / discretionary media spend.

QLDC has good reason under section 17(e) of the LGOIMA for refusing the information requested. QLDC consider it is necessary to refuse the requested information on the basis of the following grounds:

- Section 17(e) – that the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

Section 17(e) of the LGOIMA clarifies that a local authority is not required to provide information that it does not hold, or that cannot be located despite reasonable efforts. This ensures that agencies are not required to create new information in order to respond to a request.

Council has made reasonable efforts to determine whether the requested breakdown is held. However, QLDC does not report on discretionary spend for communications materials (which includes media spend where appropriate) as they are managed on a case-by-case basis.

Council's financial systems record advertising and media expenditure at a broader category level across multiple cost centres. As a result, providing the requested breakdown would require Council to manually review a large number of individual transactions and records and compile new information. No existing document or report contains this level of detail.

As a local authority, we are committed to providing access to information that we hold. However, pursuant to section 17(e) of the LGOIMA, we are unable to provide the requested information because this information is not recorded or held in the format requested.

Public interest considerations

In assessing whether to withhold information, QLDC carefully evaluates the public interest—particularly whether disclosure would enhance transparency, accountability, or informed public engagement. This assessment includes weighing those benefits against the potential harm that could result from releasing the information.

QLDC acknowledges the public interest in transparency and accountability of local authority members and officials, and the wider interest in effective governance. While QLDC seeks to release information wherever possible, in this instance it considers that the need to protect information where disclosure would be likely to expose individuals to a risk of improper pressure, harm, or harassment, outweighs the public interest in release. Release of the information could reasonably be expected to result in this outcome, thereby causing harm that outweighs the benefit of disclosure.

Therefore, QLDC has determined that section 7(2)(f)(ii) of the LGOIMA applies. In this case, no overriding public interest has been identified that would justify its release.

Right to review the above decision

Note that you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about this process is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please contact Naell.Crosby-Roe@qldc.govt.nz (Director Democracy Services).

We trust that the above information satisfactorily answers your request.

Kind regards,

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