

28 May 2026

C/- [REDACTED]

Sent via email to [REDACTED]

Request for Official Information LG26-0129 - Full Cost Breakdown Freedom Camping (Summer Season)

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your request for information held by the Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC). On 30 April 2026 you requested the following information under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA):

A clear and transparent breakdown of the total cost of freedom camping to ratepayers for the most recent summer season (through to the end of March). The associated costs for the following:

- 1. 804 Requests for Service (RFS): cost to log, monitor, and respond.**
- 2. 1,824 Summer Ambassador inspections: including staffing hours (particularly night shifts), vehicles, and operational costs.**
- 3. Rubbish collection and site clean-up associated with freedom camping.**
- 4. 2,089 infringement notices: including administration, processing, and enforcement/collection.**
- 5. Details on how many infringements have actually been paid (not estimated return).**
- 6. The Responsible Camping Coordinator role and any additional QLDC staff time/costs allocated to freedom camping.**
- 7. The total combined cost of these activities, and any other related expenses, to provide a complete picture of what freedom camping is costing ratepayers.**

On 7 May 2026, QLDC emailed you to seek clarification regarding the part of your request referring to the timeframe. QLDC explained that the Summer Ambassadors operate through to the end of April, as the “summer season” is considered to run from 1 December to 30 April. QLDC asked you to confirm whether you would like to receive information for the period from 1 December to 31 March, as originally stated in your request; or the full summer season, being 1 December to 30 April.

On 8 May 2026, you emailed QLDC with the following additional information:

“I based those dates on stats I found which the QLDC had reported until the end of March, but if you can give me details for the camping season [from 1 December to 31 March] that would be great, thanks.”

QLDC RESPONSE

In response to your request, the QLD Finance Team, the QLDC Regulatory Support Team and the QLDC Responsible Camping Programme Team were consulted.

Decision to release information

Please note that all the figures disclosed in this response are GST exclusive.

2. 1,824 Summer Ambassador inspections: including staffing hours (particularly night shifts), vehicles, and operational costs.

Between 1 December 2025 and 30 April 2026, the Summer Ambassadors completed 2,282 site visits. The total cost of Summer Ambassador wages and resources was NZD \$214,384, and fleet vehicle costs – including vehicle leasing, fuel, car washes and decals— were NZD \$34,855.

During the early implementation of the bylaw, from 17 December to 14 January, Cougar Security carried out additional nighttime patrols to encourage compliance among campers. The total cost of these patrols was NZD \$11,394.

4. 2,089 infringement notices: including administration, processing, and enforcement/collection.

The table below outlines the costs related to enforcement and collection of freedom camping infringement notices, between 1 December 2025 and 30 April 2026:

Costs	(NZD \$)
Campervan Patrols	87,336
Court Lodgement Fee	13,248
Court Administration Fee 10%	518
Legal Costs	6,119
Other including Overhead and Depreciation	214,728
Subtotal Cost	321,948
Recovery	
Freedom Camping Infringement	(\$925,600)
Court Fee Recoveries	(1,818)
Subtotal Recovery	(\$927,418)
Net Total Operating (Surplus)	(\$605,470)

5. Details on how many infringements have actually been paid (not estimated return).

For the period between 1 December 2025 and 30 April 2026, a total of 2,462 infringements relating to freedom camping were issued. Of these, 1,216 have been paid and 239 have been referred to the Ministry of Justice for collection (prosecuted). The remaining infringements are either still within their infringement lifecycle and awaiting payment, or have been waived for various reasons.

The table below outlines the types of infringements issued, along with the number issued, paid, and prosecuted:

Type	Issued	Paid	Prosecuted
Freedom Camping	2,311	1,168	221
Reserves	151	48	18

6. The Responsible Camping Coordinator role and any additional QLDC staff time/costs allocated to freedom camping.

The Responsible Camping Programme Manager is a permanent full-time role at QLDC. Additional support was contracted to assist with implementation of the bylaw, at a cost of NZD \$12,075.

From October 2024 to April 2026, staff costs associated with the Freedom Camping Bylaw 2025, including its development and implementation, totalled NZD \$212,906. Most of this cost related to developing the bylaw. From 1 December 2025 to April 2026, the staff cost was NZD \$21,747.

7. The total combined cost of these activities, and any other related expenses, to provide a complete picture of what freedom camping is costing ratepayers.

The table below outlines the costs and related expenses relating to freedom camping:

2021 Bylaw Judicial Review [2023-2024]	Cost (NZD \$)
External Legal Costs (New Zealand Motor Caravan Association Judicial Review)	135,475
2025 Bylaw Development [2024-2025]	
Tonkin + Taylor - Site Assessments and Technical Report	248,500
2025 Bylaw Implementation Works [2025-2026]	
Blue Paint, Wheel Stops and Installation	8,921
Purchase and Installation of Signs	26,975
Project Support	12,075
Responsible Camping Programme [2025-2026]	
Summer Ambassadors - Wages and resources	214,384
Fleet Vehicles	34,855
CamperMate Annual Data	3,000
Twilight Patrols - Cougar Security	11,395
Communications, Resources and Additional Signs	8,526
Red Bridge Minor Improvements	19,949
Portaloos Hire	3,640
Waste Disposal	82
Bylaw Policy Support [2025-2026]	
External Legal Advice (Ongoing)	21,118
Bylaw Policy Support (Estimate)	51,300
Tonkin + Taylor - Allenby Place Transport Report	9,800
Freedom Camping Patrols [2025-2026]	
Campervan Patrols	95,893
Total	905,888

Please note that these costs were not incurred solely within the specified timeframe of this request (1 December 2025 to 30 April 2026) but are included to provide a complete picture of the costs associated with freedom camping.

Decision to refuse information

QLDC has good reason under section 17(e) of the LGOIMA for refusing the information requested in items 1, 3, and 4 (in part) of your request. QLDC considers 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.

1. 804 Requests for Service (RFS): cost to log, monitor, and respond.

Between 1 December 2025 and 30 April 2026, QLDC received 1,054 Requests for Service (RFSs) relating to freedom camping.

The QLDC Customer Services Team receives and triages these RFSs, which are then referred to the relevant teams across the organisation for response. Several teams contribute to logging, monitoring, and responding to freedom camping RFSs, including Customer Services, Regulatory Support, the wider Enforcement Team, Enforcement Officers, and the Responsible Camping Team including the Summer Ambassadors. QLDC cannot quantify the total time and cost involved in responding to RFSs because this work forms part of business-as-usual activities for many teams. Please refer to item 2 of this response for the costs of the Summer Ambassadors and Enforcement Officers.

3. Rubbish collection and site clean-up associated with freedom camping.

Site clean-up costs are included in the Summer Ambassadors' wages, so it is not possible to identify the specific number of hours spent on this work. However, \$82 was spent on waste disposal at the Frankton Transfer Station. Other rubbish collected was absorbed into general waste disposal at the Wānaka Recreation Centre, recycled where possible, or taken to a charity shop at no direct cost to the programme. Any site clean-ups escalated to Parks contractors were managed within existing contracts and budgets.

4. 2,089 infringement notices: including administration, processing, and enforcement/collection.

The administration and processing of infringement notices is undertaken by the wider QLDC team. Similarly to RFSs, QLDC is unable to quantify the total time and cost associated with administering infringements, as this work forms part of business-as-usual activities across multiple teams. Summer Ambassadors provide an education, custodial, and monitoring service, and do not issue infringements.

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

Decision to withhold information

6. The Responsible Camping Coordinator role and any additional QLDC staff time/costs allocated to freedom camping.

QLDC has good reason under section 7(2)(a) of the LGOIMA for withholding part of the information requested in item 6 of your request. QLDC considers it is necessary to withhold the requested information on the basis of the following grounds:

- Section 7(2)(a) – the withholding of the information is necessary to protect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased natural persons.

Section 7(2)(a) of the LGOIMA is intended to protect the privacy of natural persons by allowing information to be withheld where its release would involve the unreasonable disclosure of personal information or could cause harm or distress. This provision seeks to balance the public's right to access official information with the need to respect individual privacy and prevent the misuse of personal information.

In this case, the Responsible Camping Programme Manager's wages are being withheld because they relate to identifiable natural persons. The [Privacy Act 2020](#) upholds individuals' rights to be informed about the collection, use, and disclosure of their personal information. Release of the requested information would be likely to constitute an unreasonable intrusion into the personal affairs of those persons.

In this case, the need to protect the privacy of natural person outweighs any public interest in the release of the information. Accordingly, the decision to withhold the information is justified and consistent with the provisions of both LGOIMA and the Privacy Act.

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, accountability, and good governance in local authority decision-making, and is committed to releasing information wherever possible. However, in this instance, QLDC considers that the public interest in disclosure is outweighed by the need to protect the privacy of natural persons. Releasing this information would be likely to unreasonably compromise the privacy of natural persons.

Accordingly, QLDC has determined that sections 7(2)(a) of the LGOIMA applies. No overriding public interest has been identified that would justify release of the withheld information.

Right to review the above decision

You have the right to request an investigation and review of this decision by the Ombudsman under section 27(3) of the LGOIMA. Further information is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

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

QLDC trusts that the above information satisfactorily answers your request.

Kind regards,

██████

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