

7 March 2023

File Ref: OIAP-7-27166

[REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

### **Request for information 2023-026**

I refer to your request for information dated 7 February 2023, which was received by Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington) on 7 February 2023. You have requested the following:

*"I'm just getting in touch to see if there is any data available on bus driver abuse and what sort of things our drivers are facing, and whether or not this has increased recently? I'm aware a number of people are frustrated about timetable changes and delays and am wondering if any drivers have fallen victim to verbal or physical abuse recently. If possible, am I able to get this information?"*

*I also understand there was a brawl on a Lower Hutt bus somewhat recently, and was wondering if GWRC are planning on putting protective barriers or equipping drivers with safety tools (eg. pepper spray, alarms, etc) in the wake of this incident?"*

#### **Greater Wellington's response follows:**

##### **Incidents reported**

The data we can provide in relation to bus driver abuse is limited due to the inconsistency in reporting.

**Attachment 1** to this letter contains a table which shows the incidents reported per the monthly Bus Operator reports and a report of the trends between January 2022 – January 2023, noting that these trends only reflect the number of reported incidents. This data has been combined over the network.

##### **Safety measures for bus drivers**

Current safety measures for drivers include the use of the following:

- CCTV video, camera, and audio recordings for security, monitoring and investigation (CCTV footage is owned by the operator, not Metlink, which can be supplied to the Police on request)
- Duress alarms which communicate with the bus drivers Control Room when activated to notify that help is required. Audio in the drivers cab area is also recorded upon activation of the duress alarm
- An agreement with the Māori wardens which allows them to travel on Metlink services free of charge whilst on duty to show presence and support our customers and staff
- Bus drivers are well trained in dealing with difficult situations through customer service & de-escalation training.

The above are generally the responsibility of the relevant operator with support from Greater Wellington.

Metlink is currently in discussions with the Police regarding the deployment of a new team of Warranted Transport Officers onto the Wellington Public Transport Network. This team will be employed by Greater Wellington under the Metlink brand. The team's primary function will be to assist with revenue collection; however, they will also be focused on supporting safety on the network.

Metlink continues to work with operators, and central government on initiatives that make bus driving an attractive employment opportunity. This includes making it a safe and secure employment prospect.

If you have any concerns with the decision(s) referred to in this letter, you have the right to request an investigation and review by the Ombudsman under section 27(3) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

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 on Greater Wellington's website with your personal information removed.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Samantha Gain

Kaiwhakahaere Matua Waka-ā-atea | General Manager Metlink