



5 July 2019

Hon Andrew Little
Minister of Justice
Parliament
New Zealand
By email: a.little@ministers.govt.nz

Tēnā Koe Minister Little

Google Trends Emails

I want to apologise for the miscommunication on Tuesday. I did not mean to convey that Google does not take this issue seriously. We trust this letter provides more detail, in relation to which I have liaised with my colleagues at Google LLC (Google).

When we met in December last year we confirmed our respect for New Zealand law and do so again here. We understand the need to protect the right to a fair trial and acknowledge that this is a fundamental part of the legal system.

When we met we advised that fewer than 200 New Zealand subscribers had received an email from Google Trends, which included links to international media reports. We confirmed that upon being made aware of the issue Google took action and prevented the accused's name from being included in future Trends Alert emails in New Zealand.

As part of our respect for New Zealand laws, we have worked for many years with law enforcement authorities. Google has provided special confidential forms to New Zealand law enforcement authorities to use to submit legal removal and other requests. Google also has a general webform in place where people can submit Court Orders, including suppression orders. This form is publicly available.¹ By using these tools Google is able to act quickly on court orders and other removal requests that it receives.

In relation to the case in question, Google received the order from Defence Counsel four days after it was made and after the Trends email had been sent. Once Google received the order it took immediate action to prevent any recurrence.

¹ <http://www.google.com/support/legal>.

At our meeting we committed to reviewing our systems and to work with the Courts and Police to help them use the online forms.

Since that time Google:

- examined its subscriber email systems, including daily subscriber and trending alerts, in relation to Google Trends.
- put in place procedures to reduce the opportunity for similar subscriber emails to be sent in the future.
- shared the webform with key stakeholders including the Courts, Netsafe and the Department of Internal Affairs, so that they can provide timely notification of new orders as and when they are made. We have also scheduled a meeting with the Police to reintroduce them to the online forms and explore further ways we may assist.

Following those steps we have not seen any further recurrence of this issue. However, in light of the concerns you expressed this week, Google has also suspended Google Trends emails about searches trending in New Zealand. This means that people will no longer receive emails on any trending searches for New Zealand and provides even further assurance against any recurrence.

In conclusion, we would like to build on the constructive spirit that emerged from our work with the New Zealand Government on the Call for Action on Christchurch. We hope that the measures set out in this letter address your concerns. However, please let us know if you have any questions or would appreciate further clarification.

Ngā mihi nui



Ross Young
Government Affairs and Public Policy

■■■■■■■■■■ OIA s9(2)(a)

Copy to Prime Minister by email j.ardern@ministers.govt.nz