

13 February 2013

Hon Bill English
Minister of Finance
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON

Hon Maurice Williamson
Minister for Land Information
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON



WELLINGTON

gen-i House
Level 6, 154 Featherston Street
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Dear Ministers

I am writing to request that the Government establish a national register of foreign ownership, particularly in agricultural land and agribusinesses.

Federated Farmers supports foreign investment in the economy. It is necessary and beneficial. However, we do have concern about some types of foreign investment, especially where that investment results in mass agglomeration of farmland and the vertical integration of production, processing and marketing businesses with the subsequent loss of New Zealand control.

One issue that is raised repeatedly with the Federation is the question of how much foreign ownership there is in New Zealand. Overseas Investment Office statistics are of limited use in this respect as they show only a partial flow – that is the amount of land and the value of businesses over a certain threshold sold into foreign ownership or sold between foreign owners. The statistics can not be used to measure the total flow of foreign ownership as they do not record the land and businesses that are sold by foreign owners to New Zealanders or the number of foreign owners who subsequently 'naturalise'. And because the statistics only go back to 2005 there is no information on the flows and the stock of foreign-owned land and businesses prior to and as at 2005.

There is a perception that foreign ownership is large and growing. The reality may well be different. The Federation is certainly not saying that foreign investment should be 'stopped' or further constrained – our rules are already among the most restrictive in the OECD – but we do consider that it would be useful for a more informed and more reasoned public debate for there to be a record of the amount of land and business that is held in foreign ownership.

Last October the Australian Government announced that it would be establishing an agricultural land register. Its decision was welcomed by the National Farmers Federation and by the Liberal and National Opposition, which wanted it to go further and include agribusiness.

I believe the Government should consider the establishment of such a register. I would appreciate your views on this request and I would be happy to meet with you to discuss it.

Yours sincerely

Bruce Wills
National President

c.c. Hon Nathan Guy, Minister for Primary Industries



Office of Hon Bill English

Deputy Prime Minister
Minister of Finance
Minister Responsible for HNZC

COPY

26 MAR 2013

Bruce Wills
National President
Federated Farmers of New Zealand
PO Box 715
WELLINGTON 6140

Dear Bruce Wills

Thank you for your letter of 13 February 2013 regarding establishing a national register of foreign ownership.

I appreciate your view that better information about the level and nature of foreign ownership of land and business would contribute to a more informed public debate.

As you point out, Overseas Investment Office data is insufficient for this purpose because it does not cover all land and businesses, flows of ownership from foreigners to New Zealanders or foreign owners' transition to New Zealand permanent residency or citizenship. Certificates of Title and the Companies Register also do not provide conclusive evidence of foreign or New Zealand ownership.

As my colleague Hon Maurice Williamson, Minister for Land Information, mentioned in the House on 13 March, the Government has no current plans to impose new requirements on land owners in order to establish the level of foreign land ownership. Obtaining an accurate picture would require information to be collected from every current owner of New Zealand land and on every occasion that land ownership changed. This would likely introduce significant compliance costs for both vendors and purchasers and require significant administration. As land can be acquired jointly or using a wide variety of legal persons and structures, apportioning ownership and verifying information would be complicated.

Despite these concerns about the feasibility of a national register for New Zealand, the Government will monitor Australia's experience in establishing and implementing their national foreign ownership register for agricultural land in order to draw any lessons for New Zealand. New Zealand and Australian officials have been in contact over this matter.

Thank you once again for taking the time to write.

Yours sincerely

Signed Hon Bill English

Hon Bill English
Minister of Finance

cc Hon Maurice Williamson
Minister for Land Information



Office of Hon Bill English

Deputy Prime Minister
Minister of Finance
Minister Responsible for HNZC

16 DEC 2014

New Zealand First
Bowen House
Parliament
WELLINGTON

Thank you for your Official Information Act request, received on 19 November 2014.
You requested the following:

- "1. Copies of any documents, including but not limited to reports, briefings, aides memoire and correspondence that were released from the Office of the Hon Bill English, and his staff, to Federated Farmers of New Zealand during March 2013.*
- 2. Copies of any documents, including but not limited to reports, briefings, aides memoire and correspondence within the Office of the Hon Bill English relating to Federated Farmers of New Zealand during March 2013."*

The documents you have requested do not exist. Accordingly, I have declined your request under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act – the documents alleged to contain the information requested does not exist.

This fully covers the information you requested. You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision.

Yours sincerely

Hon Bill English
Minister of Finance



Office of Hon Bill English

Deputy Prime Minister
Minister of Finance
Minister Responsible for HNZC

17 AUG 2015

Thank you for your Official Information Act request, received on 22 July 2015. You requested the following:

- "1. Copies of any documents, including but not limited to reports, briefings, aides memoire and correspondence that were sent from the Hon Bill English, and his staff, to Federated Farmers of New Zealand during March 2013.*
- 2. Copies of any documents, including but not limited to reports, briefings, aides memoire and correspondence within the Office of the Hon Bill English relating to Federated Farmers of New Zealand during March 2013."*

The documents you have requested could not be identified. Accordingly, I have declined your request under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act – the documents alleged to contain the information requested do not exist.

This fully covers the information you requested. You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision.

Yours sincerely

Hon Bill English
Minister of Finance