

25 March 2026

**Official information request regarding costs for Judicial Conduct Panel inquiry into District Court Judge Ema Aitken**

**Our Ref: OIA-2526142**

I refer to your official information request dated 18 February 2026 regarding costs for the Judicial Conduct Panel inquiry into the conduct of Judge Ema Aitken. On 4 March 2026, the Ministry of Justice partially transferred the following portion of your request to Crown Law for response:

3. *Breakdowns of costs by hearing or proceeding, if available, covering all hearings to date.*

**Response**

The Crown is funding the professional fees and disbursements of special counsel in the Judicial Conduct Panel's inquiry, counsel assisting special counsel, and research assistants to special counsel. Between 22 July 2025 and 17 March 2026, their fees and disbursements totalled \$410,710.58 (GST inclusive).

It is not possible to attribute these fees and disbursements to particular Panel hearings. I therefore refuse this aspect your request under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act 1982, as the information is not held by Crown Law, and I have no grounds for believing it is held by another agency.

The Crown has also paid special counsel and counsel assisting's reasonable travel and accommodation expenses totalling \$11,352.63 (GST inclusive).

Crown Law itself has provided advice to the Attorney-General and Acting Attorney-General, and supported special counsel's participation in the inquiry. This work has been absorbed by existing staff as part of their usual duties.

**Conclusion**

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of my decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

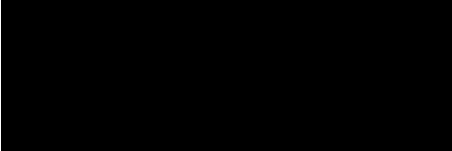
Please note that we may publish this response (with your personal details redacted), and any related documents, on Crown Law's website if we decide proactive release of this information is or may be

in the public interest. If you have any concerns about this, please let us know within 10 working days of the date of this letter.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact [OIA@crownlaw.govt.nz](mailto:OIA@crownlaw.govt.nz).

Nāku noa, nā

**Crown Law**



Daniel Perkins  
Senior Crown Counsel