

10 March 2021

[REDACTED]

By email only: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

**Official Information Act #20.156 - Travel agent / COVID complaints**

1. We refer to your request received on 10 February 2021 for the information contained in OIA 20.044,<sup>1</sup> updated for the period from 25 August 2020 to 10 February 2021.
2. The scope of your request is the number of complaints received by the Commerce Commission (**Commission**) about New Zealand based travel agents related to the Covid-19 pandemic, including the issues complained about, from 25 August 2020.
3. We have treated this as a request for information under the Official Information Act 1982 (**OIA**).
4. On 11 February 2021, we advised you:
  - 4.1 Our complaints database contains searchable fields for the name of the trader complained about, name of the complainant, date received, complaint description, relevant legislation (added by the Commission), and complaint outcome.
  - 4.2 In order to identify complaints about travel agents for OIA 20.044, we keyword searched across these fields using the terms (“travel” OR “travel agent” OR “travelagent) AND (“covid” OR “covid19” OR “coronavirus”), during the period from 14 May to 24 August 2020, and manually reviewed the results.
  - 4.3 We advised we would run the same search for your request, but for the period from 25 August 2020 to 10 February 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> Travel agent / COVID complaints: [https://comcom.govt.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0021/225507/OIA-20.044-NZ-Travel-agent--COVID-complaints-Response-Letter-22-September-2020.PDF](https://comcom.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0021/225507/OIA-20.044-NZ-Travel-agent--COVID-complaints-Response-Letter-22-September-2020.PDF)

5. On the same date, you advised that you are also interested in the number of complaints received by the Commission about each trader.

### **Our Response**

6. We have decided to grant your request.
7. The Commission has received 29 complaints about New Zealand based travel agents related to COVID-19 during the period from 25 August 2020 to 10 February 2021.<sup>2</sup> The issues complained about are as follows:<sup>3</sup>
  - 7.1 No refund or credit due to insolvency - 6 complaints
  - 7.2 Delay in refund - 6 complaints
  - 7.3 Fees<sup>4</sup> - 5 complaints
  - 7.4 Travel agent did not pass on airline refund to customer - 4 complaints
  - 7.5 Misrepresentation of rights to refund - 3 complaints
  - 7.6 Credit or refund less than original amount - 3 complaints
  - 7.7 Difficulties contacting travel agent - 3 complaints
  - 7.8 Credit instead of refund - 3 complaints
  - 7.9 Difficulties obtaining refund - 2 complaints
  - 7.10 Travel agent failed to provide information about refund - 2 complaints
  - 7.11 Travel agent charged more than airline - 2 complaints
  - 7.12 Misleading price guarantee - 1 complaint
  - 7.13 Quality concerns about the services booked - 1 complaint
  - 7.14 Travel agent failed to book preferred airline - 1 complaint
  - 7.15 Credit expiry - 1 complaint
  - 7.16 Travel agent did not offer remedy for cancelled flight - 1 complaint
  - 7.17 Additional charges - 1 complaint

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<sup>2</sup> Complaints responding to the search terms (“travel” OR “travel agent” OR “travelagent”) AND (“covid” OR “covid19” OR “coronavirus”).

<sup>3</sup> Please note that some complaints are about more than one issue and have been recorded against all issues complained about.

<sup>4</sup> This includes cancellation fees, service fees, refund fees, booking fees, admin fees, and fees to redeem credit.

8. The traders complained about are as follows:
  - 8.1 STA Travel (NZ) Limited - 9 complaints
  - 8.2 Fly Lanka - 4 complaints
  - 8.3 Flight Centre (NZ) Limited - 3 complaints
  - 8.4 A1 Corporation Limited<sup>5</sup> - 2 complaints
  - 8.5 Travel 2000 Limited - 2 complaints
  - 8.6 Student Horizons Limited - 1 complaint
  - 8.7 Eco Travel Hamilton - 1 complaint
  - 8.8 My Travel Broker - 1 complaint
  - 8.9 Worldwide Holidays Limited - 1 complaint
  - 8.10 Dunwell Investments Limited<sup>6</sup> - 1 complaint
  - 8.11 ECO Travel NZ Limited - 1 complaint
  - 8.12 Sehion Group PVT Limited - 1 complaint
  - 8.13 helloworld NZ Franchising Limited - 1 complaint
  - 8.14 Not stated - 1 complaint
9. Please note the Commission will be publishing this response to your request in the Official Information Act register on our website.<sup>7</sup> Your personal details will be redacted from the published response.
10. Please do not hesitate to contact us at [ويا@comcom.govt.nz](mailto:ويا@comcom.govt.nz) if you have any questions about this request.

Yours sincerely,

*Mary Sheppard*  
OIA Coordinator

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<sup>5</sup> Trading as A1 Travels

<sup>6</sup> Trading as Helloworld Travel Palmerston North and Helloworld Travel Feilding

<sup>7</sup> <https://comcom.govt.nz/about-us/requesting-official-information/oia-register>