

**From:** [Arlene Goss](#)  
**To:** [office@bookatour.co.nz](mailto:office@bookatour.co.nz)  
**Subject:** Response to official information request 294932  
**Date:** Friday, 31 March 2017 05:00:39 p.m.  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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31-Mar-2017

Bex Hill  
Director  
BookATour NZ Ltd  
[office@bookatour.co.nz](mailto:office@bookatour.co.nz)

Dear Ms Hill

**Official information request for ISITE information**

I refer to your official information request dated 21-February-2017 for information related to the function and operation of ISite. I apologise for the delay in responding to your request. This was due to a large number of requests received at this time. Our response to each of your questions or statements is in green font below:

Your email begins:

A couple of things remain unanswered that I would like some clarification on  
- as discussed in the meeting with yourself and Ryan I wondered what policies are in place to ensure that the Isite transparent.

All the policies of Dunedin City Council, and in addition to this, Tourism NZ iSite Membership Protocols.

What is the complaints procedure? As it stands if Isite or Louise take a dislike to any tour operators there is no way to ensure an even playing field. Is there policies in place surrounding this? If so I would love a copy for our records please.

Dunedin City Council does not have a general complaints policy, but individual policies for functions like parking officer complaints, planning enquiries and complaints, noise complaints etc. For everything else the usual process is to contact the manager of the department concerned as a first option, and if not happy then escalate it to the chief executive or an elected councillor.

- As discussed there seems to exist a large "old school boy " mentality that has developed over the years between Isite and a couple of operators both yourself and Ryan both mentioning that Louise has a great relationship with Headfirst and Good Company due to the long standing nature of their business.

Your comment surrounding this was that this business relationship could be explained by the " Isite reverting to what they know" subheading.

There are a number of operators in Dunedin who have been operating between 10 to 50years with existing business relationships throughout a well-established local, national and international tourism distribution chain. Many of these operators rely on multiple sales channels

established over the lifespan of their business to generate sales.

The Dunedin iSite is a small piece in this large established international distribution network. It is the last and only local (consumer facing) part in a long international sales channel, therefore engages with, and sells products to a very limited percentage of visitors and cruise ship passengers arriving in Dunedin, with no advance bookings and limited knowledge on who chooses to utilise its services.

That is understandable however this mentality does not display in an even playing field, again this brings us to the transparency problem. Bringing of coffee and muffins into iSite and staff sitting down enjoying them in the middle of a cruise day surely raises some eyebrows of favouritism bringing the DCC into repute.

Tourism Attraction, Accommodation, Tour and Transport operator interactions with iSite staff are common practice throughout the season across ALL iSites nationally. These provide useful conduits for both formal and informal product, schedule, accommodation, operator and market updates for both sides. The more formal of these are email updates and alerts, familiarisations, both verbal and written briefings daily, weekly or monthly; the less formal can involve verbal updates and chats over morning tea. In most instances staff pay for their own coffee, even when an operator with free time does the coffee run and collects them.

I would like to gain insight into the statistics of sales and which operators receive what through this council run entity, perhaps you could help me work through the official information act to collect this?

This information is declined under Section 7(2)(ii) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act because releasing the information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who is the subject of the information.

You mentioned there were a couple of operators on a different percentage, thanks for looking into that however I would really like an answer as to why if it took the best part of 3 years to discover what should have been a fair and even playing field.

All operators are on the same commission rate.

As was noted on the front page of the Otago Daily Times Louise was noted as saying that all operators were paying the same amount and that everyone was brought into line in 2014, however in a small town of no more than 30 operators I find it hard to believe it would be that difficult to bring everyone onto the same "page".

Can you please explain this in full and who these companies were.

There were two operators that when audited were found to still be on 10% - this has been rectified. The names of these operators are withheld under Section 7(2)(ii) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act because releasing the information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who is the subject of the information.

I would also like to request under the official information any monies paid between Port Otago

and Isite.

There is no money paid by Port Otago to i-Site or i-SITE to Port Otago.

The activity at Port Otago is far from a fair and even playing field , this has been displayed in client after client complaining directly to operators and I am not the only one. I am a fair and honest operator who prides myself on an amazing staff and reviews to prove we rank at the top of the best in Dunedin. I am welcoming the opportunity to present Dunedin to the national clientele at TRENZ this year and believe Dunedin has a lot going.

With the current display of unrest amongst operators may I suggest a group discussion **before** the end of the season occurs perhaps on a no ship day in the next week or so. This may be beneficial for you to see who is happy with the operations of Isite this year and whether or not the problems are consistent.

There is a de-brief scheduled at the end of the cruise season.

Obviously a very consistent result would be beneficial for yourself as the overseer of the Dunedin Isite and it could be beneficial for your team in planning for the following year. A survey cannot display a full result if not all operators have had a chance to fill these out, a meeting would ensure everyone has a say and can also give you a chance to collect emails from all to ensure you get the true results you need from your surveys.

There is an annual survey of operators. A cruise operator survey will be circulated.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this 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.

If you wish to discuss this information with us, please feel free to contact John Christie.

Yours sincerely  
Arlene Goss

Arlene Goss  
Governance Support Officer  
Dunedin City Council  
50 The Octagon, Dunedin; P O Box 5045, Moray Place, Dunedin 9058, New Zealand  
Telephone: 03 477 4000  
Email: [Arlene.Goss@dcc.govt.nz](mailto:Arlene.Goss@dcc.govt.nz)



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