



Paula Penfold <paula.penfold@stuff.co.nz>

## interview request

15 messages

**Paula Penfold** <paula.penfold@stuff.co.nz> 19 January 2021 at 11:41 To: media@theicehouse.co.nz

Hi there,

I'm a journalist at Stuff, currently working on a project concerning NZ-China relationships, and I'm interested in The Icehouse's partnership with iFlytek.

Is Gavin Lennox available for an interview to talk about this partnership and what it involves?

Many thanks,  
Paula

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**Paula Penfold**

**Journalist**

Stuff Circuit Investigative Unit

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**Gavin Lennox** <g.lennox@theicehouse.co.nz> 20 January 2021 at 09:21 To: "paula.penfold@stuff.co.nz"

<paula.penfold@stuff.co.nz>

Cc: Robbie Paul <r.paul@icehouseventures.co.nz>

Hi Paula,

Thanks for your enquiry. The best person to speak to regarding our relationship with iFlytek is Robbie Paul. Robbie is the CEO of Icehouse Venture (copied). His mobile is 027

Best regards

Gavin

Gavin Lennox

Group CEO

The Icehouse

+64 21

[www.theicehouse.co.nz](http://www.theicehouse.co.nz)

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**Paula Penfold** <paula.penfold@stuff.co.nz> 20 January 2021 at 09:23 To: Gavin Lennox <g.lennox@theicehouse.co.nz>

Great, thanks for your prompt response Gavin, I'll get in touch with Robbie direct.

**Paula Penfold** <paula.penfold@stuff.co.nz> 20 January 2021 at 11:16 To: r.paul@icehouseventures.co.nz

Hi Robbie,

Gavin has referred me to you regarding the below request, to talk about the partnership with iFlytek - how it works and what it involves.

Our work is predominantly video so this would be an on-camera interview.

Do you have availability next week? The interview itself would probably take about 20 minutes (but depending on the location there may be a little setup time in advance).

Many thanks,  
Paula

**Robbie Paul** <r.paul@icehouseventures.co.nz> 20 January 2021 at 13:54 To: Paula Penfold <paula.penfold@stuff.co.nz>

Hi Paula,

Thanks for reaching out. I'm happy to answer specific questions but I'm not sure there's much of interest to share regarding iFlyTek. We collaborate and co-invest with all sorts of entities and investors from around the world – and these activities are predominately led by our portfolio founders who identify and engage with organisations that have features/ value they seek. iFlyTek is no different in this regard.

Thanks

Robbie

Robbie Paul  
CEO  
Icehouse Ventures

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[www.icehouseventures.co.nz](http://www.icehouseventures.co.nz)

**Paula Penfold** <paula.penfold@stuff.co.nz> 20 January 2021 at 16:47 To: Robbie Paul <r.paul@icehouseventures.co.nz>

Hi Robbie,

Thanks for your quick response.

Yes, I understand you work with entities all over the world but in this instance it is the relationship with iFlytek we're interested in, so if you're happy to answer questions about that partnership/MOU: how it works, what each partner gains from the other, what features/value iFlytek has that are of interest to your portfolio founders, then that would be helpful.

What's your availability like next week?

Thanks,  
Paula

**Paula Penfold** <paula.penfold@stuff.co.nz> 25 January 2021 at 09:39 To: Robbie Paul <r.paul@icehouseventures.co.nz>

Hi again Robbie,

Wanting to make plans for this week and checking your availability?

Thanks,  
Paula

**Paula Penfold** <paula.penfold@stuff.co.nz> 2 February 2021 at 10:39 To: Gavin Lennox <g.lennox@theicehouse.co.nz>

Hi Gavin,

I'm coming back to you because my request to Robbie Paul has gone nowhere.

His initial response was:

*Thanks for reaching out. I'm happy to answer specific questions but I'm not sure there's much of interest to share regarding iFlyTek. We collaborate and co-invest with all sorts of entities and investors from around the world – and these activities are predominately led by our portfolio founders who identify and engage with organisations that have features/ value they seek. iFlyTek is no different in this regard.*

And my response:

*Yes, I understand you work with entities all over the world but in this instance it is the relationship with iFlytek we're interested in, so if you're happy to answer questions about that partnership/MOU: how it works, what each partner gains from the other, what features/value iFlytek has that are of interest to your portfolio founders, then that would be helpful.*

Robbie has not replied to any of my emails since. It is important we speak to someone from your organisation about this relationship - you'll have realised that the reason iFlyTek is of interest to us is because of its role in China's treatment of the Uyghur people. This is an issue that has been raised with The Icehouse in the past, and we are looking at it again, so, as I say, it's important we speak with someone from your organisation so we understand the nature of the partnership.

Since Robbie appears unavailable, are you the best person for us to speak to?

Kind regards,

**Paula Penfold**  
Journalist - Stuff Circuit

**Robbie Paul** <r.paul@icehouseventures.co.nz> 4 February 2021 at 17:03 To: Paula Penfold <paula.penfold@stuff.co.nz>

Hi Paula,

Following up on your discussion with Gavin, find below a statement which you can attribute to me.

This week, the board of Icehouse Ventures, the investment arm of The Icehouse, have requested an investigation into the ongoing relationship with IFLYTEK.

Icehouse Ventures has a number of relationships with international organisations, many of whom go on to work with and support the Kiwi startups they meet through the Icehouse Ventures community.

In March 2019, before Icehouse Ventures was created, The Icehouse and iFLYTEK signed a non-binding agreement to facilitate connections for Kiwi startups wanting to expand into China.

Since then, iFLYTEK, along with many other international companies, has presented at some of our investor events, meeting some of our investors and founders.

**Paula Penfold** <paula.penfold@stuff.co.nz> 4 February 2021 at 20:15 To: Robbie Paul <r.paul@icehouseventures.co.nz>

Hi Robbie,

Thank you for this.

A couple of questions:

What are the terms of reference for the investigation?

Who'll conduct it?

What's the timeframe?

Many thanks,  
Paula

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**Paula Penfold**  
Journalist - Stuff Circuit  
M (021)

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ik=20ee6ebba0&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-f%3A1689375949302840277&simpl=msg-a%3A%u2013YAs...> 4/6  
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**Robbie Paul** <r.paul@icehouseventures.co.nz> 5 February 2021 at 16:44 To: Paula Penfold <paula.penfold@stuff.co.nz>

Hi Paula,

The Icehouse Ventures board has requested guidance from MFAT with regards to US and other international countries' blacklists.

We intend to follow this guidance with regard to managing all of our agreements with international organisations on an ongoing basis.

The updated guidance given by MFAT on September 23rd, 2020, addresses categories of "restricted business". Neither Icehouse Ventures nor its portfolio companies are engaged in restricted businesses. The guidance does not address New Zealand's stance on other nations' blacklists or policy around individual organisations.

The board will continue to monitor the situation, consider any new information, and take action accordingly.

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**Paula Penfold** <paula.penfold@stuff.co.nz> 9 February 2021 at 11:18 To: Robbie Paul <r.paul@icehouseventures.co.nz>

Hi Robbie,

Thank you for this.

So I'm clear: is this response - that the board is requesting guidance from MFAT - the result of the investigation? Or is the investigation ongoing? If the latter is the case, can you please let me know the terms of reference, who is conducting the investigation, and the timeframe.

Also, you reference the updated MFAT guidance from September 2020 but I would point you to this:

<https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/trade/trading-weapons-and-controlled-chemicals/which-goods-are-controlled/>

Specifically the 'What is technology?' sections, and the 'Catch-all provisions', updated in October 2020.

It would be useful to know if the current MFAT guidelines are clear enough for companies to be able to navigate this area, or whether you think the guidance is inadequate?

Many thanks,  
Paula

**Robbie Paul** <r.paul@icehouseventures.co.nz> 11 February 2021 at 11:24 To: Paula Penfold <paula.penfold@stuff.co.nz>

Hey Paula,

Apologies for the delay. The Board asked us to investigate and this involves requesting guidance from MFAT and following this guidance.

**Paula Penfold** <paula.penfold@stuff.co.nz> 11 February 2021 at 12:18 To: Robbie Paul <r.paul@icehouseventures.co.nz>

Hey Robbie,

Thanks for this.

Again, just so I'm clear, aside from requesting guidance from MFAT, will the investigation cover anything else?

Because one thing that's obviously interesting is: irrespective of official guidance, in an ethical or moral sense, how does it sit with Icehouse Ventures to be doing business with a Chinese company involved in human rights abuses against Uyghurs?

Many thanks,  
Paula

**Robbie Paul** <r.paul@icehouseventures.co.nz> 11 February 2021 at 18:07 To: Paula Penfold <paula.penfold@stuff.co.nz>

Hi Paula,

Icehouse Ventures is an organisation that takes its partnerships and its business activities seriously and we are committed to investing and conducting business responsibly. As a small organisation with a big impact and partnering with organisations that are global and of material scale, it is difficult for us to understand and vet all aspects of what these partner organisations do and undertake.

Further to seeking government guidance, we are continuing to monitor any information that we can obtain with respect to iFLYTEK and assess whether these align to the values of our organisation. This is an ongoing pursuit of gathering evidence and considering new information to be able to make an informed decision about how we proceed.

Thanks,