



Cabinet Office Circular

CO (08) 11

24 November 2008

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Intended for:

All Ministers
All Chief Executives
Chief of Staff, Prime Minister's Office
All Senior Private Secretaries
All Private Secretaries
Chief Parliamentary Counsel
Official Secretary, Government House

Resumption of Cabinet Business

Introduction

- 1 This circular provides advice on the resumption of Cabinet business following the formation of the new National-led government. It includes advice on:
 - the basis on which the government will be operating;
 - the resumption of Cabinet and Cabinet committee meetings;
 - the management of Cabinet and Cabinet committee business until the end of the year;
 - review of reports due to Cabinet or Cabinet committees.
- 2 Chief Executives and Senior Private Secretaries are requested to make this circular available to all departmental and ministerial staff who need to know this information.

Operating Basis for National-led Government

- 3 Cabinet has endorsed, as the basis on which the government will operate:
- the Cabinet Manual (2008 edition);
 - the Confidence and Supply Agreements between the New Zealand National Party and the ACT Party, the Maori Party and the United Future Party.
- 4 Further guidance on the procedures to give practical effect to the agreements will be provided to Ministers' offices and departments in due course. In the meantime, consultation between the government and the support parties will be co-ordinated by the Prime Minister's office.

Resumption of Cabinet and Cabinet Business Committee

Cabinet and Executive Council meetings

- 5 The next meeting of Cabinet and the Executive Council (if required) will be on Monday, 1 December 2008. The deadline for the submission of Cabinet papers to the Cabinet Office is 10am, Thursday, 27 November 2008.
- 6 Cabinet and Executive Council meetings will be held weekly from 1 December 2008 until the last Monday before Christmas (22 December 2008).
- 7 The first meeting of Cabinet in the new year will be on Tuesday, 20 January 2009. An updated meeting timetable will be issued shortly.

Cabinet Business Committee

- 8 A Cabinet Business Committee (CBC) will be established to consider all Cabinet committee papers until the end of the year. Advice on the membership of CBC will be provided shortly.
- 9 CBC will meet on Wednesdays at 9.00am until the end of the year, commencing on Wednesday, 3 December 2008. The usual deadline for the submission of papers to the Cabinet Office for the CBC meetings is 10.00am on the previous Thursday. ***However, for the CBC meeting on 3 December 2008, the deadline will be 10.00am on Monday, 1 December 2008, so as to facilitate the submission of any urgent papers requested by Ministers.***

Other Cabinet committees

- 10 Other Cabinet committees have not yet been established. It is anticipated that regular Cabinet committee meetings will commence in early February 2009. Advice on the establishment of Cabinet committees, their terms of reference, membership and meeting timetable will be provided when decisions have been taken.

Management of Cabinet and Cabinet committee business until the end of year

- 11 Cabinet has asked Ministers to prioritise work in their portfolios to implement the policy and legislative initiatives in the New Zealand National Party's post-election plan and the confidence and supply agreements with support parties, especially the legislative initiatives to be enacted or introduced before Christmas. Priority should be given to submissions that give effect to these initiatives. Low priority papers should not be put to Cabinet for decisions before Christmas.

Review of reports due to Cabinet or Cabinet committees

- 12 A number of reports sought by the previous government are due to Cabinet and Cabinet committees before Christmas and in the new year. These reports should be put on hold until the need for the report has been reviewed by the incoming Minister.
- 13 The Cabinet Office will shortly provide Ministers and departmental Chief Executives with a schedule of the reports due in their portfolios that were requested by the previous government. Chief Executives are requested to review the schedule of reports due, in consultation with their Minister.
- 14 Following this review, Chief Executives are requested to advise the Secretary of Cabinet, in writing, of:
- the reports that are still required by the Minister and any proposed new reporting dates for these reports;
 - any reports that the Minister has decided are no longer required (for example, if it is clearly not the new government's policy).

The Cabinet Office will then update its database of the reports due to Cabinet and Cabinet committees.

Further advice

- 15 If you have any questions about the above arrangements or about the handling of a matter that needs to come to Cabinet, please contact Martin Bell (ph 817 9740; email: martin.bell@dpmc.govt.nz) or Gerrard Carter (ph 817 9309; email: gerrard.carter@dpmc.govt.nz) in the Cabinet Office.
- 16 The Cabinet Office will soon issue guidance on Ministers' access to the Cabinet records and departmental papers of the previous administration, and on handling current requests for information and complaints to the Ombudsmen under the Official Information Act 1982. Urgent queries about these matters may be directed to the Cabinet Office Legal Adviser, Lison Harris (ph 817 9741; email: lison.harris@dpmc.govt.nz).

Rebecca Kitteridge
Secretary of the Cabinet