



CABINET OFFICE

24 February 2022



Ref: OIA-2021/22-0956

Tēnā koe



**Official Information Act request: Holiday roster for COVID-19 duty Ministers and associated documents**

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received on 8 February 2022. You requested:

- "1. The roster(s) for the designated "COVID-19 duty minister" and the "duty minister" (if different) for the recent December 2021-January 2022 holiday period.*
- 3. Any further guidance or information provided to the COVID-19 duty ministers and/or duty ministers about the duty role."*

Please find **enclosed** copies of the 'Duty Minister's Roster' and 'COVID Ministers' Roster' for the December 2021 to January 2022 holiday period.

Under section 16(1)(e) of the Act, we have enclosed a summary of the information provided to duty Ministers by the Cabinet Office prior to the holiday period.

The Cabinet Manual also provides guidance on duty Ministers in paragraphs 2.46 and 2.47:

- 2.46 *A "duty Minister" is assigned to deal with urgent issues requiring ministerial involvement during extended holiday periods, most notably Christmas and New Year, when many Ministers may be out of contact. The Prime Minister's Office prepares a roster of duty Ministers for such periods to ensure that a Minister is always available.*
- 2.47 *The duty Minister's role is to carry out urgent ministerial functions on behalf of absent colleagues under the authority of section 7 of the Constitution Act (see paragraph 2.21) and to act as the first point of contact for officials. The duty Minister should, where possible, contact the relevant portfolio Minister(s) before making a public statement,*

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DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

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*making a decision, or issuing instructions to officials. The duty Minister should contact the Prime Minister or Acting Prime Minister if:*

- a. the portfolio Minister cannot be contacted; or*
- b. the portfolio Minister considers that the matter needs consideration by a wider group of Ministers or at Cabinet level.*

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

This response will be published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website during our regular publication cycle. Typically, information is released monthly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

Nāku noa, nā



Michael Webster  
**Secretary of the Cabinet**

# Duty Ministers' Roster

21 December 2021 – 16 January 2022

Duty Dates	Duty Minister
21 – 23 December	Hon Carmel Sepuloni
24 – 26 December	Hon Kelvin Davis
27 – 29 December	Hon David Parker
30 Dec – 1 Jan	Hon Jan Tinetti
2 – 4 January	Hon Peeni Henare
5 – 7 January	Hon Damien O'Connor
8 - 10 January	Hon David Clark
11 – 13 January	Hon Stuart Nash
14 - 16 January	Hon Poto Williams

# COVID Ministers' Roster

21 December 2021 – 16 January 2022

Duty Dates	COVID Minister
21 Dec – 2 Jan	Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern Hon Chris Hipkins
3 – 16 Jan	Hon Grant Robertson Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

# Role of Duty Ministers

## Introduction

Issues may arise over the holiday period about which it would normally be appropriate for Ministers to be advised, and if necessary to make decisions, or take other action. The Ministers' duty roster ensures that a Minister is available to be the first point of contact.

The duty Minister should be contacted by officials in the first instance. Depending on the nature of the issue or event, the duty Minister may contact the relevant portfolio Minister[s] if necessary. In particular, the duty Minister needs to be able to contact key Ministers and/or officials in the event of an emergency, or if a national or international event occurs that requires Ministerial level involvement. The portfolio Minister should be involved if at all possible where instructions must be given to officials or decisions taken in a particular portfolio area.

## Emergency situations and significant events: Power to Act

It is possible that some significant events might arise over the holiday period [e.g. a major international issue or a serious flood in New Zealand or COVID-19 resurgence]. The duty Minister should be the first point of contact in the event of a major issue or emergency. The duty Minister is responsible for alerting the portfolio Minister, the Prime Minister and other key Ministers. Normally the portfolio Minister, if available, will then take the lead; otherwise the duty Minister should take the lead.

It is the responsibility of the portfolio Minister or duty Minister to consider whether the issue is such that it needs consideration at Cabinet level. If, in the judgement of those Ministers, Cabinet level consideration may be required, they should consult with the Prime Minister or Acting Prime Minister.

Cabinet has authorised a group of Ministers to have Power to Act to take decisions where major issues or emergencies arise during the holiday period [CAB-21-MIN-0536]. The group of Ministers is the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Hon Kelvin Davis and Hon Dr Megan Woods in consultation as appropriate with the relevant portfolio Minister[s] and the duty Minister.

If Cabinet level decisions are required from the group of Ministers with Power to Act, the portfolio Minister [or the duty Minister if the portfolio Minister is not available] should discuss how the matter should be handled with the Prime Minister [or the Deputy Prime Minister in the event that the Prime Minister is not available]. Arrangements should then be made for the group of Ministers to consider the issue [e.g. by teleconference or videoconference] and take decisions as appropriate.

## COVID-19 Resurgence

There is a separate COVID-19 Ministers' Roster. COVID Ministers will be the first point of contact on COVID-19 issues. The COVID Ministerial Group also has Power to Act if necessary to take decisions on COVID-19 response issues.

## **Issues that might involve the Governor-General**

Any issues that might potentially involve the Governor-General should in the first instance be referred to the Secretary of the Cabinet/Clerk of the Executive Council.

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