



28 April 2022

Ref: OIA-2021/22-1059

Dear [REDACTED]

Official Information Act request relating to contribution by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to increased transparency of government

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) received on 4 March 2022. You requested:

“In the Prime Minister’s first speech to Parliament after the 2017 election, she proclaimed:

‘This government will foster a more open and democratic society. It will strengthen transparency around official information.’

How does the Prime Minister and this Department [DPMC] aim to achieve that goal?

What programmes have the Prime Minister and this Department [DPMC] initiated since 2017, that aim to encourage transparency in Government?

Has the Department [DPMC] provided any advice to the Government regarding reforming the Official Information Act since 2017? If so, when was this advice last tendered?”

On 23 March 2022 we wrote to you extending the time limits for response by 25 working days. The additional time was needed to complete consultations before a final decision was made on your request. Following the extension, I am now in a position to respond.

We have addressed your request in two parts. The first about increasing transparency of government, including access to official information and the second part responding to your question about reform of the Official Information Act 1982. As you have addressed your request to DPMC and asked about programmes initiated by DPMC since 2017 that would increase transparency and access to official information, we have understood your request to be about DPMC-led initiatives that would increase transparency. I note that the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is an autonomous Departmental Agency hosted by DPMC. This response has focused on DPMC-led initiatives however, you can find also find information released by NEMA to increase transparency on their website pages at: dpmc.govt.nz/departmental-agency/nema.

If you have not already done so, you may wish to consider approaching other state sector agencies about any of their own initiatives that would increase transparency. A list of government agencies and website details can be found on the website for Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission at: www.publicservice.govt.nz. We have also included some government-wide initiatives which are coordinated by another agency but DPMC contributes by its own programme.

You asked for information about DPMC initiatives since 2017. We have assumed that you had intended the timeframe of your request to be from when the current Government first took office, in October 2017. If this is not the case, please advise.

Like other government agencies, much of the work DPMC undertakes is routinely made publicly available. Accordingly, we have identified those programmes, projects or initiatives where the initiative is solely to increase transparency or where increased transparency is a particular focus. One of the main ways to increase transparency is through making more official information publicly available. DPMC, like other agencies, has had a particular focus on increasing the proactive release of official information. There are also initiatives around the compilation and reporting on specific information to increase the transparency around progress made on the implementation of a policy or programme.

DPMC programmes increasing transparency

We have identified the following DPMC initiatives or programmes that have increased transparency, including access to official information.

- Across government, Cabinet documents are considered for proactive release 30 days after final decision. DPMC participates in this initiative with the preparation and publication of Cabinet documents. This initiative is set out in a press release of 18 September 2018: www.beehive.govt.nz/release/government-proactively-release-cabinet-papers-%E2%80%93-and-open-government-action-plan-be-issued.

Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission (PSC) is the coordinating agency for the implementation of proactive release requirements. September 2018 Cabinet documents and briefings can be found on the PSC website at: www.publicservice.govt.nz/resources/proactive-releases.

- Like the rest of the state sector DPMC has a programme for the routine publication of responses to official information requests so the broader public has access to official information that has been released under the Act. These can be found on the DPMC website at: dpmc.govt.nz/publications.
- DPMC hosts the Unite Against COVID-19 website. Extensive information showing decisions made throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has been and continues to be made publicly available. You can find these proactively released Cabinet documents and supporting briefing material on the COVID-19 website at: covid19.govt.nz/about-our-covid-19-response/proactive-releases.

In addition to information available on the Unite Against COVID-19 website, throughout COVID-19 pandemic there have been regular press releases and press briefings with media. These are available on the COVID-19 website at: covid19.govt.nz/news-and-data/latest-news and Ministry of Health website at: www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-news-and-media-updates for updates, and: www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-data-and-statistics for data and statistics including daily updates on case numbers.

- The Child Poverty Reduction Act 2018 creates accountability and transparency, and requires the government of the day to:
 - set 3 and 10 year targets on a defined set of child poverty measures
 - report annually on the measures

- report each Budget day on how the Budget will reduce child poverty and how the government is progressing towards its targets.
- report on child poverty related indicators.

Information about the Child Poverty Reduction Act 2018 can be found on the DPMC website at: dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/reducing-child-poverty/child-poverty-reduction-and-wellbeing-legislation.

- The Children’s Amendment Act 2018, which underpins the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, requires the Minister responsible to report to Parliament annually on progress in achieving the Strategy’s outcomes, including specific reporting on outcomes for Māori children. Two Annual Reports have been published, along with regular Monitoring Reports outlining progress in implementing the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. These are available on the Child and Youth Wellbeing website: childyouthwellbeing.govt.nz/measuring-success/reporting.

Also available on this website are the findings of the national engagement process to develop the Strategy, including: a full report summarising New Zealanders’ input; specific reports from the engagement with children and young people, and with iwi and Māori groups; and the submissions we received. These are available at: childyouthwellbeing.govt.nz/engagement.

- The Health and Disability Reform Transition Unit in DPMC regularly publishes decisions made and other updates on progress. Most recent information can be found on the Future of Health Te Anamata o te Oranga website at: www.futureofhealth.govt.nz/publications/information-releases.
- The National Security Group in DPMC is coordinating the Government response to the Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCOI) into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019. A range of measures exist to support transparency of official information on the response to the report. This includes the proactive release of relevant Cabinet papers consistent with wider DPMC Transparent Government initiatives. You can find these on the DPMC website at: dpmc.govt.nz/publications/documents-relating-governments-response-royal-commission-inquiry-terrorist-attack.

Also subject to proactive release is documentation for meetings of the grouping of Ministers responsible for the response. See dpmc.govt.nz/publications/proactive-release-government-response-rcoi-terrorist-attack-responsible-ministers-meetings-agenda.

DPMC has also prepared and released a publicly available Progress Tracker. This provides status updates on progress on addressing the Royal Commission’s recommendations and its wider intent. It will be updated quarterly, or more regular if required based on progress achieved. See dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/national-security/royal-commission-inquiry-terrorist-attack-christchurch-masjidain-4.

A regular electronic Pānui (newsletter) is also sent to members of the public who have subscribed to it providing them with information on the ongoing response and upcoming engagement opportunities.

Information resulting from hui held with directly impacted and wider communities is also proactively prepared and released. These hui were held to help understand key concerns and communities’ priorities, to answer questions about the report and its implementation, to provide information about initiatives underway, and to outline how communities can contribute to the response work programme. See dpmc.govt.nz/our

[programmes/national-security/royal-commission-inquiry-terrorist-attack-christchurch-masjidain-0.](#)

Letters of advice between the Lead Coordination Minister for the Government Response on the RCOI and the ministerial advisory group Kāpuia are regularly published and can be found [dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/special-programmes/kapuia-ministerial-advisory-group](#)

Collectively these various measures contribute to the transparency of official information on the Government's response to the Royal Commission's report.

Work is also underway to proactively release minutes of the Response Steering Group, the grouping of senior officials established to support successful coordination and delivery of the work programme for the response to the Royal Commission's report. This work, which will be completed in the last quarter of the 2021/22 year, will provide even greater levels of transparency of official information relating to the management and delivery of the Government's response.

- DPMC's National Security Group facilitated the development of the 2021 National Security Intelligence Priorities on behalf of the Minister for National Security and Intelligence. The 2021 Priorities make more information available to New Zealanders about our intelligence priorities and enable a more informed public discussion on where our national security intelligence agencies focus their ongoing efforts. The National Security Intelligence Priorities help us to identify threats, risks, and challenges to New Zealand's security and wellbeing, while outlining current areas of interest where intelligence can support the Government to make informed decisions. For the first time, the supporting Cabinet paper on the Priorities was also proactively released. The relevant press release can be accessed on the Beehive website at: [www.beehive.govt.nz/release/national-security-intelligence-priorities-released.](#)
- DPMC's National Security Group is working on how to best engage with the public on national risks. DPMC is co-leading a National Security Long-term Insights Briefing (LTIB) about national security risks which will be published later this year. Specifically, the topic for this public-facing document is '*Engaging an increasingly diverse Aotearoa New Zealand on national security risks, challenges, and opportunities*'. A summary of public feedback on the LTIB can be accessed on the DPMC website at: [dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/national-security/national-security-long-term-insights-briefing/ltib-topic.](#)

Changes to the Official Information Act 1982

You also asked whether DPMC had provided any advice to the Government regarding reforming the Official Information Act since 2017 and when was advice last tendered.

The Official Information Act 1982 falls under responsibility of Ministry of Justice and Minister of Justice. There is a small amount of information identified as relevant to this part of your request contained in briefing material provided by the DPMC Policy Advisory Group to the Prime Minister. These briefings are provided to the Prime Minister in confidence to support her in her role as leader of the Government and chair of Cabinet. Further details about this briefing material, including dates, are withheld in their entirety under the following sections of the Act:

- section 9(2)(f)(iv), to maintain the confidentiality of advice tendered by or to Ministers and officials.

- section 9(2)(g)(i), to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinion.

No public interest in releasing the withheld information has been identified that would be sufficient to override the reasons for withholding it.

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.

Yours sincerely



Clare Ward
**Executive Director,
Strategy, Governance and Engagement**