



REVIEW:

HON STUART NASH'S MINISTERIAL COMMUNICATIONS WITH DONORS

Report to the
Prime Minister

Secretary of the Cabinet
14 June 2023

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Executive Summary

- 1 I have considered Hon Nash’s ministerial communications with declared donors against the three principles in scope of this review, namely Cabinet confidentiality, collective responsibility, and conflicts of interest, and have found:
 - 1.1 In respect of conflicts of interest, Hon Nash was involved in the appointment of a declared donor and close associate to a position on a government advisory board. Hon Nash identified a conflict of interest in relation to that appointment. He took substantive steps to manage the conflict around the making of the appointment but in my view further steps were required to fully manage the conflict of interest. This finding is at the lower level in terms of inconsistency with Cabinet Manual principles.
 - 1.2 I did not find any instances (other than those that led to his dismissal) in which Hon Nash shared information with declared donors in a manner that was inconsistent with the Cabinet Manual principles of Cabinet confidentiality, collective responsibility or conflicts of interest.

Background

- 2 On 28 March 2023, Prime Minister Rt Hon Chris Hipkins advised the Governor-General to dismiss Cabinet Minister Hon Stuart Nash from all his ministerial portfolios.
- 3 Hon Nash first entered Parliament in November 2008 (as a list MP) and was elected as the electorate MP for Napier in 2014. He was sworn in as a Minister on 26 October 2017. Between that date and the date of his dismissal, Hon Nash held the following portfolios:

Hon Nash – portfolios (2017 – 2023)	
<i>Portfolio</i>	<i>Dates held</i>
Minister for Small Business	26/10/2017 – 01/02/2023
Minister of Revenue	26/10/2017 – 06/11/2020
Minister of Fisheries	26/10/2017 – 06/11/2020
Minister of Police	26/10/2017 – 06/11/2020 and 01/02/2023 – 15/03/2023 (Hon Nash was also acting Minister of Police 25/01/2023 – 01/02/2023)
Minister of Tourism	06/11/2020 – 01/02/2023
Minister of Forestry	06/11/2020 – 28/03/2023
Minister for Economic and Regional Development	06/11/2020 – 01/02/2023
Minister for Economic Development	01/02/2023 – 28/03/2023
Minister for Oceans and Fisheries	01/02/2023 – 28/03/2023

- 4 Hon Nash resigned as Minister of Police on 15 March 2023, after he made public comments criticising a decision of the court, and explained that he had contacted the Police Commissioner to suggest the Police appeal the decision.¹ At the time, the Prime Minister concluded that Hon Nash's comments did not meet the standards set out in the Cabinet Manual, and were inconsistent with the principle that Ministers should not comment on or involve themselves in the results of particular court cases.
- 5 On 17 March 2023, the Prime Minister announced that he had demoted Hon Nash and placed him on a final warning. This followed the Prime Minister becoming aware that Hon Nash, acting as the local MP for Napier, had contacted a senior official at MBIE to ask him to look at the immigration cases of two surgeons in his electorate. In doing so, he went beyond the established process for Ministers and MPs to advocate in an immigration case. The Prime Minister commented that this instance demonstrated a pattern of behaviour which did not reach the standard he expects from Ministers.²
- 6 On 28 March 2023, Hon Nash was dismissed from all his remaining portfolios when the Prime Minister became aware of an email that Hon Nash sent in June 2020³ to two contacts regarding a commercial rent relief package that had been considered by Cabinet. In the email Hon Nash set out his opposition to the decision Cabinet reached and described the positions that other named Cabinet Ministers had taken. The Prime Minister considered this to be a clear breach of collective responsibility and Cabinet confidentiality.
- 7 The recipients of the email had previously donated to Hon Nash's election campaign, and were commercial property owners who had an interest in the Cabinet decision discussed in the email. Hon Nash explained to the review that the recipients were representatives of the two largest commercial property owners in Wellington at the time and had worked with Hon Nash on an alternative proposal that Hon Nash had taken to Cabinet. Hon Nash told the review that neither he nor the recipients would have benefited from the proposal put forward.

Review by Secretary of the Cabinet of communications with donors

- 8 On 29 March 2023, the Prime Minister asked me, as the Secretary of the Cabinet, to review Hon Nash's ministerial communications with declared donors. The terms of reference for the review were publicly announced on 29 March 2023.⁴ The terms of reference were subsequently amended on 25 May 2023 – a copy is included as **Appendix A**. The amendment changed the scope of the review from considering only pecuniary conflicts of interest (para 2.64 of the Cabinet Manual) to considering conflicts of interest generally (paras 2.64 to 2.68 of the Cabinet Manual).
- 9 The declared donors are those who have been recorded in Hon Nash's electoral candidate returns (for 2020 and 2017) in accordance with the requirement that candidates declare every candidate donation or contribution to a candidate donation of more than \$1,500 (including GST).⁵ Hon Nash's electoral returns are available on the elections.nz website.

¹ Statement from the Prime Minister on Stuart Nash (15 March 2023)

<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/statement-prime-minister-stuart-nash>.

² Statement from the Prime Minister on Stuart Nash (17 March 2023)

<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/statement-prime-minister-stuart-nash-0>.

³ See Stuart Nash dismissed from Cabinet (28 March 2023). Note that the press release incorrectly states that the email was sent in March 2020: <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/stuart-nash-dismissed-cabinet>.

⁴ Review into Stuart Nash's communications with donors (29 March 2023)

<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/review-stuart-nash%E2%80%99s-communications-donors>.

⁵ See the Electoral Act 1993, section 209.

- 10 In accordance with the amended terms of reference, the review considers and makes findings as to whether, in his ministerial communications with declared donors to his 2017 or 2020 Napier electorate campaigns, Hon Nash complied with the following principles set out in the Cabinet Manual:
- 10.1 Confidentiality (para 5.23);
 - 10.2 Collective responsibility (paras 5.24 and 5.25); and
 - 10.3 Conflicts of interest (paras 2.64 to 2.68).
- 11 More information about the Cabinet Manual and those principles is set out below.
- 12 The terms of reference do not ask me to consider and make findings in relation to other principles set out in the Cabinet Manual. Nor do they ask me to consider the actions of any of the declared donors or any other person. This review is therefore solely focused on the actions of Hon Nash in relation to the principles in paragraph 10 above.
- 13 In particular, questions of lobbying and access to Ministers do not fall within the terms of reference for this review. On 3 April 2023 the Prime Minister announced that he had commissioned a major piece of work that will look at policy options for regulating lobbying activities. That work is being undertaken by the Ministry of Justice.
- 14 The terms of reference left it open to me to determine the process for the review. Details of the steps taken and process followed are set out below.
- 15 This review did not have investigative powers. The searches undertaken for ministerial communications therefore necessarily proceeded on the basis of Hon Nash's consent, and to an extent, in reliance on information provided by him (eg as to donor contact details, and any personal email addresses he used to communicate with them).
- 16 A consent-based review without investigatory powers naturally has some limitations. I am not able to give an assurance that I have seen all information relevant to the review. The review's findings are based on the information that was located and identified as in scope following the searches described below.

Review process

- 17 In completing the review, I have been assisted by a small team of Cabinet Office staff (the review team). This section sets out the process followed in carrying out this review.

Obtaining the relevant donor information

- 18 The review team prepared a list of the declared donors for 2017 and 2020 and asked Hon Nash to confirm:
- 18.1 for each donor, the name of any individual he had contact with as a representative of the donor;
 - 18.2 the phone numbers and emails addresses for each donor or representative.
- 19 Hon Nash provided the review team with the information requested. He advised that he did not have cellphone numbers for four donors/donor representatives. One donation was organised through a third party, so Hon Nash was unable to provide an email address for that donor.

Information from Hon Nash's Parliamentary email accounts

- 20 Since 2012 the Parliamentary Service has provided Information Technology networks, equipment and services to Ministers of the Crown and their Ministerial Support staff under a memorandum of understanding with Ministerial and Secretariat Services (Department of Internal Affairs). In practice this means that Ministers and their offices store ministerial information on the Parliamentary Service network, and Ministers use their parliamentary email accounts for both ministerial and parliamentary business. In light of this practice, the review requested that the Parliamentary Service assist with searching for information relevant to this review. The Parliamentary Service facilitated our requests for assistance in accordance with the requirements of the Protocol for the Release of Information from the Parliamentary Information, Communication and Security Systems.⁶ In accordance with the requirements of that protocol, all searches were undertaken, and the resulting information supplied to the review, with Hon Nash's consent.
- 21 The Parliamentary Service searched its systems using the email addresses of declared donors or donor representatives provided by Hon Nash, and a number of key words based on the names of the donors and donor representatives. The Parliamentary Service provided all search results to the review team.

Information from Hon Nash's Gmail account

- 22 Hon Nash advised that he communicated with some declared donors through a Gmail account. He consented to this review accessing his Gmail account to undertake the same searches as the Parliamentary Service undertook on his parliamentary emails.

Letters to declared donors

- 23 The Parliamentary Service also searched ministerial document drives for correspondence between Hon Nash and the declared donors, again with Hon Nash's consent. They did so by searching the full names of each declared donor or donor representative. No relevant documents were found.

Text and WhatsApp messages

- 24 The terms of reference refer to text, WhatsApp and Signal messages with declared donors as being in scope of the review.
- 25 Hon Nash advised that he did not communicate with declared donors or donor representatives via Signal.
- 26 Hon Nash agreed to the review team taking possession of his phone to review his text and WhatsApp messages with declared donors and donor representatives.⁷ The nature of this consent meant that the review was not able to receive a searchable download of the messages on Hon Nash's phone. Instead, the review team manually reviewed the phone and took screenshots of relevant text messages. While there were some WhatsApp messages to and/or from some declared donors, there were none that came within scope of the terms of reference of the review (ie they were not ministerial communications because they were personal or parliamentary in nature).

⁶ Available at <https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/parliamentary-rules/other-rules-and-protocols/protocol-for-the-release-of-information-from-the-parliamentary-information-communication-and-security-systems/>.

⁷ Note that as explained above, Hon Nash did not have cellphone numbers for all declared donors.

27 There were some time periods in which there were no text message exchanges with certain declared donors or donor representatives on Hon Nash's phone, sometimes for months. Hon Nash told the review that, as part of keeping up to date with communications, he did, at times, delete messages from his phone – a protocol he says he developed well before his ministerial career. I have drawn no conclusions, adverse or otherwise, about the presence or absence of texts on Hon Nash's phone.

Hon Nash review of draft report

28 The principles of natural justice generally require that, if a proposed finding is adverse to any person, that person is made aware of that proposed finding and the matters on which the proposed finding is based, and has an opportunity during the course of the inquiry to respond on those matters.⁸ In addition, natural justice requires that any findings are based upon evidence that has some probative value.⁹

29 I have carried out this review on the basis of those principles.

30 Hon Nash was provided the opportunity to comment on a draft of this report and did so on 6 June 2023. He was provided with another draft of this report on 9 June and provided additional comments on 13 June 2023. I have carefully considered all of his comments on the draft reports in preparing this final report.

Parliamentary privilege

31 Proceedings in Parliament are protected by parliamentary privilege, and this review should properly exclude material that is subject to parliamentary privilege.

32 Both Hon Nash and the Clerk of the House were provided with the opportunity to consider whether any information considered as part of the review is subject to parliamentary privilege. This was on the basis that if any question arose as to whether material relevant to the review is subject to parliamentary privilege, that material would be referred to the Speaker. If the Speaker upheld the claim for privilege, the material would not be considered part of the review. No information was identified by Hon Nash or the Clerk of the House as being subject to parliamentary privilege.

The Cabinet Manual

33 The Cabinet Manual is an authoritative guide to central government decision-making for Ministers, their offices, and those working within government. It includes guidance about the standards of personal conduct expected of Ministers and sets out options for managing conflicts of interest where necessary. Ultimately, Ministers are accountable to the Prime Minister for their behaviour (Cabinet Manual para 2.56).

34 Successive administrations have endorsed the Cabinet Manual as the basis on which they will operate. It is one of the first items on the agenda of the first Cabinet meeting of each new government.

35 The following sections summarise the relevant principles of the Cabinet Manual and set out the key points that were considered in respect of each when the communications were reviewed. In accordance with the terms of reference, I have not commented in this report on

⁸ As codified in the Inquiries Act 2013, s 14(3), although that Act does not apply to this review.

⁹ See the Inquiries Act 2013, s 19 (as noted above, that Act does not apply to this review).

any communications that I consider are not relevant to the three Cabinet Manual principles set out above, being confidentiality, collective responsibility and conflicts of interest.

- 36 For the purposes of this review, the relevant edition of the Cabinet Manual is the 2017 edition, as that was the current edition throughout Hon Nash’s tenure as a Minister. The 2023 edition of the Cabinet Manual was published in April 2023 (ie, after the review was initiated but before it was completed). For convenience, I refer in this report to the paragraph numbers in the 2023 edition, but I note that no substantive changes were made to the relevant paragraphs between the 2017 and 2023 editions.¹⁰

Confidentiality (paragraph 5.23)

- 37 The Cabinet Manual provides (at para 5.23) that:

Discussion at Cabinet and Cabinet committee meetings is informal and confidential. Ministers and officials should not disclose proposals likely to be considered at forthcoming meetings, outside Cabinet-approved consultation procedures. Nor should they disclose or record the nature or content of the discussions or the views of individual Ministers or officials expressed at the meeting itself. The detail of discussion at Cabinet and Cabinet committee meetings is not formally recorded, or included in the minutes.

- 38 Cabinet is the central decision-making body of the Executive Government. Cabinet meetings (which generally take place weekly) are attended by Cabinet Ministers, and sometimes by Ministers outside Cabinet if issues relevant to their portfolios are being discussed. Cabinet is where final decisions are made on all important matters of policy.
- 39 Cabinet committees are standing committees of Cabinet which are established by subject matter. They provide the forum for more detailed consideration and discussion of issues before those issues are referred to Cabinet. Ministers are members of the committees relevant to their portfolios, and officials may also be invited to attend meetings to assist Ministers in some cases.
- 40 Confidentiality of discussions at Cabinet and Cabinet committee meetings is an important means of ensuring that the debate that occurs at those meetings is open and robust. It is in the public interest that Ministers are able to express their individual views and to test government proposals and/or suggest alternative proposals in a confidential setting. Sharing the views expressed by individual Ministers in Cabinet or Cabinet Committee may have a chilling effect on their willingness to speak frankly about a proposal.
- 41 Cabinet confidentiality is also an essential means of upholding the principle of collective responsibility (discussed below), which underpins the system of Cabinet government.

Collective Responsibility (paragraphs 5.24 and 5.25)

- 42 The principle of collective responsibility is explained at paragraphs 5.24 and 5.25 of the Cabinet Manual:

The principle of collective responsibility underpins the system of Cabinet government. It reflects democratic principle: the House expresses its confidence in the collective whole of government, rather than in individual Ministers. Similarly,

¹⁰ The only significant difference in the relevant paragraphs is that the 2023 Cabinet Manual includes a definition of “close associate” (para 2.67). However, that is the definition that the Cabinet Office has applied and referenced in its advice to Ministers for a number of years.

the Governor-General, in acting on ministerial advice, needs to be confident that individual Ministers represent official government policy. In all areas of their work, therefore, Ministers represent and implement government policy.

Acceptance of ministerial office (whether inside or outside Cabinet) means accepting collective responsibility. Issues are often debated vigorously in the confidential setting of Cabinet meetings, although consensus is usually reached and votes are rarely taken. Once Cabinet makes a decision, Ministers must support it (except as provided in paragraphs 5.27 – 5.29), regardless of their personal views and whether or not they were at the meeting concerned.

- 43 Collective responsibility means that Cabinet decisions must be supported by all Ministers in public, whatever their own views and whatever the views they express in Cabinet. Confidentiality of Cabinet discussions is key to this principle, as if it were publicly known that an individual Minister had disagreed with a particular approach or proposal, that would undermine both collective responsibility and that Minister’s ability to support the decision.
- 44 There are some exceptions to collective responsibility, which take the form of agreed mechanisms, such as “agree to disagree” processes (see para 5.27 of the Cabinet Manual). Those exceptions are not relevant to this review.

Conflicts of interest (paragraphs 2.64 to 2.68)

- 45 Conflicts of interest may arise between Ministers’ personal interests and their public duty because of the influence and power that Ministers exercise, and the information to which they have access, both in the individual performance of their portfolio responsibilities and as members of the Executive (para 2.59 of the Cabinet Manual). The Cabinet Manual contains guidance to assist Ministers in identifying conflicts of interest and sets out expectations as to how they should be managed when they arise. The responsibility for proactively identifying conflicts of interest and ensuring that they are addressed promptly rests with Ministers (para 2.62).
- 46 Pecuniary interests are financial interests such as assets, debts and gifts. A pecuniary conflict of interest may arise if a Minister could reasonably be perceived as standing to gain or lose financially from decisions or acts for which he or she is responsible, or from information to which he or she has access (para 2.64). In the context of interactions with donors, it is possible that a Minister may be influenced by a donation (either because of financial support previously provided, and/or the possibility of future financial support), or that they may be perceived to be so influenced.
- 47 A conflict of interest may also arise where a Minister’s family members or close associates derive or might be perceived to derive, a personal, financial or other benefit from a decision or action by a Minister. As explained in the Cabinet Manual (para 2.67) whether someone is a close associate will involve questions of judgement and degree:

Simply being acquainted with someone, having worked with them, or having had official dealings with them will not usually create a conflict of interest, but a longstanding, close, or very recent association or dealing might.¹¹

- 48 Appropriate management of conflicts of interests or perceived conflicts of interest is critical to protecting the integrity of the decision-making processes of executive government and

¹¹ As noted above, while this definition of “close associate” was a new addition to the Cabinet Manual in 2023, it is the definition that has been applied by the Cabinet Office for a number of years.

maintaining public trust in the Executive. The onus is on Ministers to identify and manage their conflicts of interest (paras 2.62 and 2.74).

- 49 The Cabinet Manual provides the following guidance about how conflicts should be managed:

Ministers must ensure that any conflicts of interest are addressed promptly. The Secretary of the Cabinet (and, where appropriate, the chief executive of the agency concerned) should be kept informed of conflicts of interest as they arise. In addition, the Prime Minister should be advised in writing of conflicts that are of particular concern or that will require ongoing management. If in doubt about the appropriate course of action, Ministers should consult the Prime Minister or the Secretary of the Cabinet (para 2.74).

- 50 Most conflicts can be managed by taking one or more of the following measures, in consultation with, and on the advice of, the Cabinet Office (para 2.76):

- 50.1 making a declaration of interest (and withdrawing from the relevant discussion or meeting if appropriate);
- 50.2 not receiving papers on a particular issue;
- 50.3 transferring responsibility to another Minister;
- 50.4 transferring responsibility to an agency;
- 50.5 divestment of the relevant interest;
- 50.6 placing investments in a blind investment vehicle; or
- 50.7 resignation from a particular organisation.

- 51 As the Cabinet Manual notes, public perception is a very important factor (para 2.68), and appearances and propriety can be as important as actual conflicts of interest (para 2.60).

- 52 The Cabinet Office provides advice and support to Ministers in relation to conflicts of interest on behalf of the Prime Minister. Where management steps are considered necessary, the Cabinet Office supports Ministers to ensure those steps are effective – eg, removing Ministers from distribution lists, and ensuring agency Chief Executives are informed, or by seeking the Prime Minister’s agreement to a transfer of responsibility.

- 53 Discussions between the Cabinet Office and the Prime Minister and other Ministers about actual or potential conflicts of interest are treated as confidential. As the Ombudsman has noted, “it is important that Ministers have the confidence to raise concerns about conflicts of interest in a free and frank manner so that the Cabinet Office is in a position to support Ministers in identifying and managing conflicts of interest”.¹²

- 54 Every year, the Cabinet Office proactively releases a summary of certain actions taken by Ministers during the previous 12 months in order to manage actual or potential conflicts of interest. The information released includes transfers of responsibility to other Ministers and standing arrangements not to receive Cabinet papers.

¹² Chief Ombudsman’s opinion: Request for information regarding ministerial conflicts of interest (October 2012) <https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/sites/default/files/2022-03/Requests%20for%20information%20regarding%20ministerial%20conflicts%20of%20interest.pdf>.

55 A Minister may sometimes take steps to manage a conflict without seeking advice from the Cabinet Office, such as asking another Minister to step in, or absenting themselves from a discussion about a close associate when it occurs. These steps may in practice be sufficient to manage the particular conflict. However, if the proposed course of action is not adequate, or its management is not properly recorded or implemented, then despite the Minister's best intentions, there may continue to be a risk of an actual or perceived a conflict of interest.

Identifying ministerial communications

56 This review relates only to ministerial communications. As a first step, the review team considered the material resulting from the various searches conducted, excluding as out of scope material that was clearly not a ministerial communication (such as personal communications, and communications made to or from Hon Nash solely in his capacity as MP for Napier).

57 Anything that touched on ministerial business was treated as a ministerial communication, regardless of whether it was sent to or from a personal or parliamentary account, and regardless of whether the tone of the communication was formal or informal.

58 The outcome of the searches and processes described above was:

58.1 There was no record of Hon Nash communicating with four of the declared donors.

58.2 Hon Nash exchanged communications which are outside the scope of this review with three of the declared donors/donor representatives. The communications are out of scope because they are not ministerial communications (and are either personal communications, or communications to/from Hon Nash in his capacity as an MP).

58.3 The review identified in-scope communications (ie ministerial communications) with six donors/donor representatives – Troy Bowker (Caniwi Capital), Richard Jeffery, Andrew Kelly, Greg Loveridge (Tirohanga Holdings and GRL Holdings), Phil McCaw, and Marty Verry (Red Stag).

59 The in-scope communications were sent to and/or from Hon Nash's parliamentary email addresses, his Gmail address, and/or by text message.¹³

60 The fact that Hon Nash was communicating with donors is not in itself an issue. As the Cabinet Manual notes at paras 2.69 and 2.82:

Ministers do not act in isolation from their political, constituency, and community networks. Indeed, some members are elected to Parliament because of their close association with and advocacy for particular interest groups. Participation in decision-making by such Ministers allows Cabinet to consider diverse viewpoints in reaching a collective decision.

...

In a democracy, everyone has the right to make representations to Ministers on matters that concern them. Ministers will receive a large number of requests for meetings with people and organisations seeking either to influence government policy or to position themselves for providing services.

¹³ As explained above, no relevant WhatsApp messages were obtained.

Para 2.85 includes a qualifying caution:

It is a valid and appropriate aspect of a Minister's role to engage with representatives of non-government and commercial organisations. Care should be taken, however, to avoid creating a perception that representatives or lobbyists from any one organisation or group enjoy an unfair advantage with the government.

Findings

- 61 Having reviewed Hon Nash's ministerial communications with the declared donors, my findings are as follows:
- 61.1 Hon Nash identified a conflict of interest in relation to an appointment of a declared donor and close associate to a position on a government advisory board. He took substantive steps to manage the conflict around the making of the appointment but in my view further steps were required to fully manage the conflict of interest. This finding is at the lower level in terms of inconsistency with Cabinet Manual principles.
- 61.2 I did not find any instances (other than those that led to his dismissal) in which Hon Nash shared information with declared donors in a manner that was inconsistent with the Cabinet Manual principles of Cabinet confidentiality, collective responsibility or conflicts of interest.
- 62 The framework I applied when considering Hon Nash's ministerial communications with declared donors was as follows:
- 62.1 When assessing whether Hon Nash's communications raised issues of Cabinet confidentiality, I considered whether the communications referred to discussion or material discussed at either Cabinet or Cabinet committee meetings that had already taken place (including views of Ministers or officials expressed at such meetings); and/or proposals likely to be discussed at forthcoming Cabinet or committee meetings (outside Cabinet approved consultation procedures). As noted, I did not find any material of that kind in Hon Nash's ministerial communications with declared donors.
- 62.2 When assessing whether Hon Nash's communications raised issues of collective responsibility, I considered whether the communications related to a matter in respect of which Cabinet had made a decision; and whether the communications involved Hon Nash either not supporting the decision reached, and/or providing information about diverging views within Cabinet on the particular issue or decision. Again, I did not find any material of that kind in Hon Nash's ministerial communications with donors, other than the communications that led to his dismissal.
- 62.3 When assessing whether Hon Nash's communications raised issues of conflicts of interest, I considered whether they showed that:
- 62.3.1 a person close to Hon Nash (eg family members, whānau or close associates) had derived or might be perceived as deriving some personal, financial or other benefit from a decision or action by Hon Nash or the government;

62.3.2 he had participated in decision-making on matters affecting close associates;

62.3.3 he could reasonably be perceived as standing to gain or lose financially from decisions or acts for which he was responsible and therefore might be influenced to make decisions, progress policies or take steps, because of a donation.

63 In applying this framework, I was conscious of not holding Hon Nash to a counsel of perfection, and of the need to consider the substantive management of the conflict, rather than whether or not he adopted exactly the management approach outlined in the Cabinet Manual. That said, conflicts of interest are an area in which perceptions matter, and good process is a crucial part of managing those perceptions.

Conflicts of interest – government appointment of a donor and close associate

A Background

64 On 3 August 2020, Phil McCaw donated \$6,500 to Hon Nash’s 2020 election campaign. Hon Nash has noted publicly that Mr McCaw is also a longstanding and close friend, with their friendship dating back to high school in Napier.¹⁴

65 In May 2022, the Minister for Research, Science and Innovation, Hon Dr Megan Woods, appointed Mr McCaw as the chair of the Startup Advisors Council, a body which supports the Minister for Regional and Economic Development, and other Ministers as appropriate, to make sound decisions that support New Zealand’s startup ecosystem to grow and thrive.¹⁵ At the time of the appointment, Hon Nash was the Minister for Regional and Economic Development. This section sets out the details of that appointment.

66 On 14 February 2022 Mr McCaw emailed Hon Nash (at his Gmail address) about the Council. Mr McCaw said “I wanted to flick you a note regarding the start-up council with my initial thoughts that we can use to confirm that we’re in alignment with Ministers”. The email includes Mr McCaw’s views on the role of start-ups, accelerating start-ups, and identified the areas that Mr McCaw expected the Council to explore and seek Ministerial action on.

67 At the end of the email, Mr McCaw states:

“Stu, I’m keen to help and have further ideas on how to go about this, but my ask of you is two-fold:

- 1. Recognition from your Ministerial peers that **start-up businesses are crucial to your policy aims** and that we need to create the right environment for them to thrive. For example, start-ups are going to play a key role in climate innovation,*
- 2. A commitment to explore and act. I don’t expect the council to come up with expensive policy initiatives but there is a very strong desire to see action and progress. I will not be able to enroll [sic] or hold people on this council if there is no follow through”.*

¹⁴ Hawke's Bay Knowledge Bank: <https://knowledgebank.org.nz/audio/nash-stuart-alexander-interview/>.

¹⁵ Start-up Advisors Council Terms of Reference <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/business-and-employment/economic-development/startup-advisors-council/terms-of-reference/>.

- 68 The review of Hon Nash's phone found no text messages between Hon Nash and Mr McCaw between 9 December 2020 and 30 October 2022, other than a group chat conversation in March 2021 (about attendance at an event).
- 69 The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) provided further information about the appointment process for members of the Council, and the related briefing documents. In summary:
- 69.1 when considering establishing the Council in 2021, MBIE Economic Development officials discussed potential appointments with Hon Nash, as Minister for Economic and Regional Development;
 - 69.2 Mr McCaw was mentioned in an MBIE briefing note in November 2021 as a possible candidate for appointment. MBIE advised that he was also suggested by Hon Nash;
 - 69.3 MBIE advised that Hon Nash disclosed to officials the potential for a perception of a conflict of interest, given his friendship with Mr McCaw. Hon Nash suggested that he should not have a formal role in the appointment process for Council members if Mr McCaw was included;
 - 69.4 an MBIE briefing to Ministers in February 2022 noted that Hon Dr Woods would make the appointments to the Council, and noted that a further briefing would be provided to Hon Dr Woods with recommendations for the names of potential members of the Council;
 - 69.5 a further briefing to Hon Dr Woods in March 2022 included suggested names for the chair and membership of the Council. The briefing proposed that Mr McCaw be appointed as chair of the Council, and noted that the wider New Zealand startup community had suggested Mr McCaw would make a good chair. The briefing included a draft paper for Hon Dr Woods to lodge with the Cabinet (Appointment and Honours) Committee (the APH Committee), asking that the Committee note her intention to appoint the members of the Council, including Mr McCaw as chair;
 - 69.6 MBIE advised that it considered it was supporting both the Minister of Economic and Regional Development and the Minister for Research, Science and Innovation with the formulation of, and appointment of members to, the Startup Advisors Council.
- 70 The APH Committee considered the proposed appointments to the Council in May 2022, including the appointment of Mr McCaw as chair for an initial 12 month term. The Council had yet to be established, and the chair's term was to commence on the date of appointment. The chair of the Council is paid \$375 per day spent undertaking the role. Hon Nash was not a member of the APH Committee.
- 71 The APH decisions were subsequently confirmed by Cabinet. Hon Nash was present at the meeting. The Cabinet Office has no record of his making a declaration of interest in relation to that item.
- 72 The establishment of the Council and appointments was publicly announced on 26 May 2022. The appointment announcement was made jointly by Hon Nash (as Minister for

Economic and Regional Development), and Hon Dr Woods (as Minister for Research, Science and Innovation).¹⁶

73 On 23 August 2022, Mr McCaw emailed Hon Nash, referring to the appointment. The relevant part of the email states:

As you will be aware I have recently accepted the role, graciously offered by you and your MBIE team, to Chair the Start-up Council. I am excited by this opportunity and have started to actively engage with Council members and government officials to figure out how we can significantly scale our start-up eco-system...

74 The Council is an advisory body.¹⁷ It does not have powers to direct or oversee any government initiatives or programmes. The terms of reference, which are available on MBIE's website, note:

The role of the Council is accountable to the Minister for Economic and Regional Development and will support the Minister for Economic and Regional Development, and other Ministers as appropriate, to make sound decisions that support New Zealand's startup ecosystem to grow and thrive...

...The Chairperson of the Council is responsible for...maintaining a close relationship with the Minister for Economic and Regional Development, and MBIE as the secretariat.

75 According to the terms of reference, the Minister for Regional and Economic Development may appoint members of the Council, including the Chairperson, and may terminate any appointment at his or her discretion.

76 MBIE has advised that, while the terms of reference refer only to the Minister for Economic and Regional Development, in practical terms the Council reports to both that Minister and the Minister for Science, Research and Innovation.

B Application of relevant Cabinet Manual principles

77 My analysis below is focused solely on Hon Nash's actions, and does not reflect in any way on Mr McCaw's qualifications for this role.

78 As noted above, it is ultimately a Minister's responsibility to identify and manage conflicts of interest (para 2.62). The fact that Mr McCaw was a donor to and close associate of Hon Nash meant that a conflict of interest requiring management arose for Hon Nash in the context of this appointment, and in any subsequent decisions to be made by him that would affect Mr McCaw.

79 That is both because of the possibility that Hon Nash's decision making could be perceived to be influenced by the donation received, and because, as explained at para 2.65 of the Cabinet Manual, a conflict may arise where a close associate might derive a benefit from a decision or action by a Minister. The Cabinet Manual also notes that it may not be appropriate for Ministers to participate in decision-making on matters affecting family members, whānau or close associates, for example by proposing a family member for appointment (para 2.66).

¹⁶ Startup Advisors Council appointed (26 May 2022) <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/startup-advisors-council-appointed>.

¹⁷ Start-up Advisors Council Terms of Reference <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/business-and-employment/economic-development/startup-advisors-council/terms-of-reference/>.

- 80 Hon Nash identified that there was a conflict here due to his close relationship with Mr McCaw, and identified the need for the appointment to be made by another Minister. That was appropriate, but in these circumstances, it was not the end of the management required. The relationship between the Chair and Hon Nash as Minister was an on-going one, and the terms of reference stated that Hon Nash continued to have responsibility for further decisions around Mr McCaw's reappointment or dismissal. Hon Nash's friendship with, and the donation from, Mr McCaw conflicted with this ongoing responsibility.
- 81 I do not criticise Hon Nash for initially suggesting Mr McCaw as a candidate for appointment. From the information I have seen, he did this in the context of suggesting a name for consideration by officials for inclusion in the mix, as opposed to directing an appointment be made. He also advised them of the close association between him and Mr McCaw.
- 82 But it has taken some unpacking to work out the chain of events in relation to Hon Nash's role in Mr McCaw's appointment. A member of the public seeing the announcement of Mr McCaw's appointment, and the terms of reference for the Council on the MBIE website, could well assume that Hon Nash had appointed Mr McCaw as Chair of the Council. Having reviewed all the material, I am satisfied that is not the case, but it demonstrates the perception risks that may arise where conflict management is not carefully stepped through and recorded.
- 83 Good practice in managing this conflict would have involved:
- 83.1 formally transferring responsibility for the appointment of the chair to another Minister in writing and with the agreement of the Prime Minister. That would have ensured the identification of the conflict, the arrangement to manage it and the reason for the transfer were clearly recorded;
 - 83.2 considering any ongoing ministerial responsibilities or decisions that might affect Mr McCaw, and ensuring those had been considered and addressed. As noted above, the terms of reference state that Hon Nash had continuing responsibility in relation to Mr McCaw's tenure in the role. In the circumstances, given Mr McCaw was a close associate and donor, those ongoing responsibilities should also have been clearly transferred to Hon Dr Woods;
 - 83.3 declaring his interest when the APH decisions were confirmed by Cabinet; and
 - 83.4 not participating in the announcement of the appointment. Hon Nash's intention in asking Hon Dr Woods to make the appointment was to distance himself from the decision. His inclusion in the announcement of the appointment of the Chair risked creating the impression that he had been involved.
- 84 As an aside, I note that Hon Nash continued to have a role in liaising with the chair of the Council after his appointment. In some situations, a Ministerial conflict relating to an appointment might flow through to impact the ongoing relationship between the Minister and the relevant appointee. However in this case, the Council also reported in practice to the Minister for Research, Science and Innovation and the Council was advisory only (so no issues of inappropriate influence of a decision-making body arise).
- 85 Overall, I conclude that Hon Nash did not fully manage his conflict of interest in relation to this appointment, but as noted above, this finding is at the lower level in terms of inconsistency with Cabinet Manual principles.

Appointment of another donor to a government role

86 For completeness, I note that the communications considered as part of this review also refer to the fact that a representative of a donor, Marty Verry (the chief executive of donor Red Stag), was appointed to a government role as a member of the Forestry Industry Transformation Plan (ITP) Advisory Group in 2021. The Ministry for Primary Industries has advised me that the appointments to the Forestry ITP Advisory Group were made by officials.

Sharing information about portfolio intentions with donors

87 Among the ministerial communications I reviewed, there were two that I considered particularly closely, before coming to the conclusion that they are not inconsistent with the three Cabinet Manual principles that are in scope of this review. I have set out the analysis that underpins that conclusion below.

A Background

88 As noted above, Phil McCaw donated to Hon Nash's 2020 campaign and is also a close associate of Hon Nash. Another donor, Andrew Kelly, donated \$5000 to Hon Nash's 2017 campaign (on 31 July 2017), and \$5000 to Hon Nash's 2020 campaign (on 2 September 2020). Mr Kelly is also a long-term friend and close associate of Hon Nash.¹⁸

89 After the 2020 election, former Prime Minister Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern announced the details of her new Cabinet on 2 November 2020.¹⁹ Hon Nash was to be appointed Minister of Forestry, Minister of Economic and Regional Development, Minister of Tourism, and Minister for Small Business (a portfolio he held prior to the election). He was appointed to those portfolios on 6 November 2020.

90 On 1 November 2020, the day before the Prime Minister's public announcement, Hon Nash sent separate emails to Phil McCaw and Andrew Kelly. The email to Mr McCaw had no substantive message but had the subject line "please read" and attached a document called "Economic Development Portfolio 2020 V1". The email to Mr Kelly attached a document titled "Forestry Portfolio" and included the following message:

*The first page of the one page forestry doc
I will look to tighten it a bit – but rushing :-)
Has to go tonight (because i offered).
Thoughts
Stu*

91 The documents are attached as **Appendix B** and **C**. They appear to set out Hon Nash's thoughts for his approach to the relevant portfolios:

91.1 The Economic Development Portfolio document set out three objectives for economic development, followed by a plan for the first six weeks. It notes: "*There are some great initiatives that came through Cabinet Committees, but I am unsure how they have progressed (eg procurement, wood first policy, maori economic*

¹⁸ Money in Politics: Labour Party candidate Stuart Nash received donations to the tune of \$99,000 (2 March 2015) <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/money-in-politics-labour-party-candidate-stuart-nash-received-donations-to-the-tune-of-99000/YQR2BQXBXIE2PCJMGQB7RLPBMU/>.

¹⁹ New Cabinet focused on COVID-19 recovery (2 November 2020) <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/new-cabinet-focused-covid-19-recovery>.

development initiatives etc”). The document also includes brief comment on the Small Business Portfolio, including the first point of a plan for the first six weeks.

91.2 The Forestry Portfolio document sets out an introduction about how Hon Nash will approach the portfolio, and sets out his plan for the first six weeks (a list of six different actions).

92 The searches of Hon Nash’s emails and texts did not produce any responses to these documents from either Mr Kelly or Mr McCaw.

93 Most of the content of each document is at a high level of generality. However, there were two specific ideas set out in the forestry document that was emailed to Mr Kelly: the renaming of Te Uru Rākau as the New Zealand Forest Service, and the relocation of the operational headquarters of Te Uru Rākau from Wellington to Rotorua.

94 Four months later, in March 2021, Hon Nash advised Cabinet that he intended to signal his vision for the forestry and wood processing sectors by changing the name of Te Uru Rākau, Forestry New Zealand to Te Uru Rākau, The New Zealand Forest Service.²⁰ He also advised Cabinet that he intended to formally recognise Rotorua as the operational headquarters for Te Uru Rākau, The New Zealand Forest Service. Hon Nash announced these two decisions on 29 April 2021.²¹

B Application of relevant Cabinet Manual principles

95 I have considered Hon Nash’s conduct in sharing the portfolio documents with Mr Kelly and Mr McCaw against the principles of Cabinet confidentiality, collective responsibility and conflicts of interest.

96 **Collective responsibility:** I do not consider that sharing these documents raised any issues in terms of Cabinet collective responsibility.

97 **Cabinet confidentiality:** As noted above, Ministers should not reveal information about discussions at Cabinet and Cabinet committee meetings, and should not disclose proposals likely to be considered at forthcoming meetings outside Cabinet-approved consultation procedures (para 5.23).

98 In relation to information about matters already considered by Cabinet or a Cabinet committee, the communications to Mr Kelly and Mr McCaw do not obviously refer to existing Cabinet decisions. The Forestry Portfolio document refers to initiatives that came through Cabinet committees, but does so at a high level, referring to “*procurement, wood first policy, maori economic development initiatives etc*”. That statement does not reveal confidential Cabinet committee discussions.

99 In relation to information about proposals to be considered at a forthcoming meeting, again, most of the material shared in each document is at a high level, rather than being in the nature of specific proposals. I have no concerns about the communication with Mr McCaw on that score.

²⁰ The relevant paper is titled Reprioritisation of remaining 1 Billion Trees Fund and is available at: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/46168-Reprioritisation-of-remaining-1-Billion-Trees-Fund-Cabinet-paper>. The Minute is CAB-21-MIN-00824, available at: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/46165-Reprioritisation-of-Remaining-One-Billion-Trees-Funding-Cabinet-minute-CAB-21-MIN-0084.01>.

²¹ Greater role for a public forestry service (29 April 2021) <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/greater-role-public-forestry-service>.

- 100 The two exceptions to the high-level nature of the content are the references to the name and headquarters of Te Uru Rākau, which were subsequently the subject of a paper to Cabinet. At the point these ideas were shared with Mr Kelly, when Hon Nash had not even been appointed to the portfolio, I do not consider that they could fairly be described as having reached the stage of being “proposals likely to be considered at forthcoming meetings”. I therefore do not find the sharing of this information in this context to be inconsistent with the principle of Cabinet confidentiality.
- 101 **Conflicts of interest:** In relation to conflicts of interest, I have looked at these documents against the principles in the Cabinet Manual, and in particular paragraph 2.65 of the Cabinet Manual which notes:
- A conflict of interest may arise if people close to a Minister, such as...close associates, might derive, or be perceived as deriving, some personal, financial or other benefit from a decision or action by the Minister or the government. Ministers must therefore be careful not to use information they access in the course of their official activities in a way that might provide some special benefit to their...close associates...*
- 102 Hon Nash’s communications with Mr Kelly and Mr McCaw provide them with an early and private indication of his intentions for his portfolios. However, I do not consider that the opportunity to provide comment on Hon Nash’s proposals for his portfolios before he shared them with ministerial colleagues or officials can properly be characterised as a “benefit” as anticipated by paragraph 2.65. I have seen no evidence, for example, that there was information in these documents of which the recipients could take commercial advantage.
- 103 Paragraph 2.65 addresses conflicts of interest arising from close relationships, rather than concerns about broader issues of access or lobbying. I make no judgement as to the application of those broader issues in this situation.
- 104 I have therefore concluded that in relation to these two ministerial communications, Hon Nash did not act inconsistently with the Cabinet Manual principles in scope of this review, namely Cabinet confidentiality, collective responsibility, and conflicts of interest.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Appendix A – Terms of Reference (amended)

Review of Stuart Nash’s Ministerial Communications with Donors: terms of reference (amended)

Background

Mr Stuart Nash was dismissed from his ministerial portfolios on 28 March 2023 following the disclosure of a June 2020 email in which he communicated confidential Cabinet information to two individuals who were also donors to his electorate campaign.

The confidentiality of Cabinet information, and the principle of Cabinet collective responsibility, are important components of public trust and confidence in Cabinet decision-making.

The Prime Minister wishes to verify the assurances given to him by Mr Nash that there were no other instances beyond what has already been disclosed.

Purpose

The purpose of the Review is to determine whether there have been other breaches of Cabinet collective responsibility or confidentiality, or perceived or actual conflicts of interest, in communications Stuart Nash has had with people and entities who made declared donations to his 2017 or 2020 electorate campaigns (declared donors).

Scope

The Review will look into, make findings on, and report to the Prime Minister as to whether, in his ministerial communications with declared donors to his 2017 or 2020 Napier electorate campaigns, Mr Nash complied with the following principles set out in the Cabinet Manual:

- Confidentiality (para 5.23)
- Collective responsibility (paras 5.24 and 5.25)
- Conflict of interest (paras 2.64 to 2.68).

Communications, for the purposes of this Review, means any written communications by letter, email, text message, WhatsApp or Signal.

The period under consideration is the time during which Mr Nash held any ministerial portfolio (26 October 2017 to 28 March 2023).

Declared donors excludes the Labour Party and its branches outside of the Napier electorate.

Out of scope

The Review will not make findings as to any civil, criminal or disciplinary liability of any person but may identify further steps that could be taken in respect of such matters.

Reviewer

The Secretary of the Cabinet will undertake this Review. She may determine her own processes.

Timeframe and reporting

The Review will commence immediately and is expected to report to the Prime Minister in two months.

Appendix B - Text of “Forestry Portfolio” document sent by Hon Nash to Andrew Kelly on 1 November 2020

Forestry

Introduction

There will be a bit of tidying up to do in this portfolio following on from the last minister, who articulated an end-game objective (one billion trees) but not much of a clear and coherent strategy around how to get there.

As Labour’s Forestry Spokesperson for a number of years, and having worked in the industry in the past, I know a lot of the key stakeholders and the industry drivers, and I also have a long term vision for this sector of the economy, so can pretty much start straight away on slightly reorienting the government’s role in improving sector outcomes and meeting government objectives.

My Economic Development role will help considerably in this task.

First 6 weeks

- 1. Meet with key stakeholders across all sector groups in order to hear and share ideas around the State’s role in developing and growing all aspects of the forest industry (production, conservation / environmental, carbon sequestration etc); including growing the number of high quality sustainable jobs across the sector.*
- 2. Understand where the money from the one billion trees programme lies, how it has been allocated and if it has been spent / allocated in a way that optimises the government’s forestry ambitions and objectives. This portfolio received a lot of money across several budgets; but time limited. I do not have the figures re how much was appropriated v how much was spent, but the first thing I would do is understand these amounts, figure out what is committed and then determine how much can be repurposed in a way that can add more value.*
- 3. Rename Te Uru Rakau ‘The New Zealand Forest Service’ (but keeping TUR as the Maori name), because I want to be very clear what we are establishing and how we want to move forward. This will still be a business unit of MPI*
- 4. Move the NZ Forest Service head office to Rotorua. This is the geographic heart of the forest industry in New Zealand and, therefore, is the appropriate location for the Head Office of the NZFS.*
- 5. Better understand the State’s current role in forestry and how we can optimise our opportunities. For example, the NZ Super Fund owns around 42.5% of Kaingaroa Forest, and yet there is an independent forest management group managing this asset. I believe Kaingaroa should be managed by the state for the long term benefit of the country. I would be interested to know if there are any other SOE’s that own forests as part of their investment portfolio; eg, ACC, etc.*
- 6. Subtly understand if the one billion trees policy is, in fact, the best way to ensure maximum planting and to meet core objectives. Labour released its forestry policy that codified the ‘right tree right place’ strategy by ensuring that forestry planting on classes 1 to 5 land required a resource consent. We need to significantly build on this in order to achieve meaningful and sustainable change.*

By the end of January I will present you with a clear vision, much broader and deeper strategy, and a set of measurable objectives based on where I believe we should take this portfolio in order to achieve the overall Govt objective.

Appendix C - Text of “Economic Development Portfolio 2020 V1” document sent by Hon Nash to Phil McCaw on 1 November 2020

Economic Development Portfolio

Introduction

There will be a bit of tidying up to do in this portfolio following on from the last two ministers (Economic Development and Regional Economic Development).

While I will need a full briefing on the initiatives currently underway in both portfolios to better understand the dynamics to date, as far as I am concerned, there are three very clear objectives for economic development

- 1. Intervention where some form of correction is required (for good reason) when there has been market failure (the historical rationale for govt-led economic development)*
- 2. Understanding NZ global competitive advantage / global value proposition and leveraging off this in a way that we can seek to add significant capability and capacity by building and/or developing markets and communities.*
- 3. Building capacity - if the rationale for government investment is through a capacity building lens, then government serves as a facilitator for the population at large, including the private sector. By promoting capacity, the public sector’s contribution extends beyond improving efficiency and equality towards bolstering a foundation upon which long-term sustainable growth and development can be achieved.*

This is a portfolio that will work closely with several other key portfolios; including RS&E, Education and the new IT portfolio that you mentioned re David Clark...

First 6 weeks

- 1. Develop a rough plan as to how we will meet our election commitments in a timely and efficient manner*
- 2. Gain an understanding where the government has invested time and resources over the previous term; and especially post-covid, in order to ensure that investments meet a clear criteria around what constitutes Economic Development (as opposed to unfocussed projects that might be worthy on one level but do not meet the strict criteria around economic development). Decisions will need to be made as to whether to progress with past work or reorient direction. There are some great initiatives that came through Cabinet committees, but I am unsure how they have progressed (eg procurement, wood first policy, maōri economic development initiatives etc)*
- 3. An internal audit of the Provincial Growth Fund. I am interested to get a rundown on every single project where funding has been approved. I am interested to know:*
 - a. If the funding has been drawn down, and if so, if the project has been completed*
 - b. If the funding hasn’t been drawn down, but it’s been promised, at what stage is the project at*
 - i. If the project is on track then good,*
 - ii. If the project isn’t on track then understand why with a view to either holding the money until things progress or returning the money to the centre*

4. *Meet with as many key stakeholders in the Regional economic development space to gain an understanding of their vision for their region and what role the government can play in helping them achieve their vision²²*
5. *Capital markets: I am certain that we can do better here – and better with the money the government contributes through VIF etc.. I have a few ideas that I will begin exploring before Christmas.*
6. *Start work on a vision document that provides a level of detail as to where we would like to be in ten years' time, and how we are going to get there. Similar in a way to the MPI document, which I thought was a great initiative.*

As a note, I've never really understood what we want to achieve in the economic development space; but I'm not sure if this because I have never really asked this question of previous ministers (even though I have worked closely with them across portfolios), or if because we haven't really articulated a clear proposition. Whatever the reason, I would like to be more transparent across Cabinet and caucus in both the economic development and regional economic development areas of responsibility.

At some point (but not the first 6 weeks) I will initiate an independent review of the MBIE model of operation. My experience (and, I understand, the experience of others) is that there is a large amount of duplication and inefficiency within MBIE that needs to be sorted and restructured out. While there is a substantial amount of work in these first five points, this is only the tip of the economic development iceberg. By the end of January I will present you with a clear vision, much broader and deeper strategy, and a set of measurable objectives based on where I believe we should take this portfolio in order to achieve the overall Govt objectives; especially in a post-Covid world where building resilience is key

Small Business Portfolio

This is the only portfolio where I have continuity of oversight, and so am very comfortable where things are at.

There is a substantial body of work currently underway based on the recommendations that came out of the Small Business Council's report that will continue.

I said to the SB team when I left Wellington that if I retained the portfolio, I expect that we will easily do four years' worth of work in the three available. They are up for it!

First 6 weeks

1. *Start actioning election manifesto commitments (in conjunction with other responsible Ministers) while continuing at pace the current work programme*

²²When I was the Economic Development Spokesperson in opposition, I undertook an audit of every regional economic development plan to check their integrity and efficacy. I am interested to know how these have progressed; if at all. I suspect the PGF – and the race for cash – meant that a number well worked plans were shelved.