



CABINET OFFICE

4 July 2023



Ref: OIA-2022/23-0997

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request: Conflicts of interest

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received on 9 June 2023. You requested:

“Could you please list which ministers and how many times each, if any, over the past six years, have been requested by the Cabinet Office to divest / sell or transfer assets such as shares / bonds or other financial assets / interests in order to comply with the requirements to declare their interests to the Registrar of Pecuniary and Other Specified Interests.

Could you please also advise if any other minister, besides Michael Wood, currently has any outstanding interest in any organisation which may be deemed to be a perceived or actual conflict of interest which the cabinet office has queried the status of ownership or divestment over?”

Ministers are personally responsible to the Prime Minister for identifying and managing conflicts of interest as and when they arise. The Cabinet Office, on behalf of the Prime Minister, supports Ministers in identifying and managing conflicts of interest that may arise in relation to their ministerial responsibilities.

Successive Ombudsmen have long held the view that Cabinet Office advice to Ministers is inherently confidential. It is in the public interest that the Cabinet Office can obtain and assess information about conflicts of interest and provide advice to Ministers on how to resolve them. Ministers are encouraged to seek advice about conflicts from the Secretary of Cabinet on a confidential basis. Details regarding conflicts of interest are not generally disclosed, in order to ensure the confidentiality of Cabinet proceedings, to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs and in some cases to protect personal privacy.

The Cabinet Office holds information that falls within scope of your request. I am however withholding this information under the following sections of the Act:

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DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

Te Tari o te Pirimia me te Komiti Matua

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- section 9(2)(f)(iv), to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials; and
- section 9(2)(g)(i), to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers or officials in the course of their duty.

Every year, the Cabinet Office proactively releases information and about the management of ministerial conflicts in accordance with an agreement with the Office of the Ombudsman. This information covers transfers of responsibility and arrangements not to receive papers.

These annual releases are published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website at <https://www.dPMC.govt.nz/our-business-units/cabinet-office/ministers-and-their-portfolios/ministers-interests>.

In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Act. No public interest has been identified that would be sufficient to override the reasons for withholding that information.

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

This response may 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



Nicola Purvis
Deputy Secretary of Cabinet (Constitutional and Honours)