



29 April 2024

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Refs: OIA-2023/24-0568
OIA-2023/24-0589

Dear [REDACTED]

Official Information Act request for DPMC information on AUKUS and meetings attended by officials referred to in WPQ 528

Thank you for your two Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) requests to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) relating to the AUKUS partnership. We clarified your first request for information relating to AUKUS on 29 February 2024. Your second request about meetings attended by officials was received on 29 February 2024. Your requests were for:

Request clarified on 29 February 2024:

"Please provide all official information held by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet since 17 July 2023 that relates to AUKUS".

Request received on 29 February 2024:

*"... please provide a list of the meetings attended by officials from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet referred to in the reply to written parliamentary question 528 (2024), inclusive of date, location, and the names and titles of participants.
Further, please provide a list of the documents produced to support these meetings."*

We have worked to the timeframes from 17 July 2023, which is the date given in your first request and in Written Parliamentary Question (WPQ) 0528 (2024) to 23 February 2024 for your first request (date of your original request) and 13 February 2024 for your second request, which was the date of WPQ 0528 (2024).

As noted in our previous response to you, DPMC's National Security Group leads, coordinates and supports a national security community that delivers a secure and resilient New Zealand. We support the Minister for National Security and Intelligence to deliver on their priorities for national security by providing intelligence assessment and strategic advice on national security and intelligence issues. The National Security Group's advice does not typically cover matters of foreign policy.

DPMC's Policy Advisory Group provides the Prime Minister with comprehensive policy advice and a 'helicopter view' of how the public service is progressing the Government's priorities.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) supports the Minister of Foreign Affairs on foreign policy issues, the Government's foreign affairs objectives and to represent New Zealand in bilateral, regional and multilateral meetings. MFAT supports the Prime Minister's leadership in international diplomacy with strategic advice and guidance on international engagements, including with foreign leaders, as well as on particularly complex foreign policy issues. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) is the government's lead civilian advisor on defence, providing advice to help government make well-informed decisions about the defence of New Zealand and its interests, purchasing major defence equipment to meet the

New Zealand Defence Force's capability needs, and assessing the Defence Force's functions, duties and projects, and how we deliver capability.

On 28 March 2024, the time frame for responding to your request was extended under section 15A of the Act by 19 working days because a search through a large quantity of information, and consultation was needed before a decision could be made on the request. Following this extension, I am now in a position to respond.

Meetings with DPMC officials

You asked for a list of meetings attended by DPMC officials referred to in the reply to the WPQ 528 (2024) with details, including a list of documents in support of these meetings. These are meetings in which AUKUS was a named agenda item from 17 July 2023 until 13 February 2024 (date of the WPQ).

To respond to this part of your request, searches were made of DPMC records and relevant officials were asked about meetings they have attended. From our records, we have identified the following meetings attended by DPMC officials in the timeframe of your request which specifically related to AUKUS.

Meetings attended by two Principal Advisors in the NSG:

- AUKUS Pillar Two – interagency officials meeting Defence House, Wellington, Wednesday 7 February 2024.
- AUKUS Pillar 2 briefing from Australia – Defence House, Wellington, Thursday 22 February 2024.

DPMC holds a draft document relating to the meeting held on 7 February 2024.

Briefing of the Governor-General, attended by DPMC Chief Executive, DCE National Security Group, and Chief Advisors to the Chief Executive – Wellington, Tuesday 10 October 2023. This briefing was for the Governor-General's information only. Information held in relation to this meeting is a runsheet for the briefing meeting.

DPMC documents in scope

You requested all official information held by DPMC since 17 July 2023 that relates to AUKUS. We have understood this request to be for relevant information generated or provided by DPMC. Most of the information held by DPMC relates to the drafting of advice prepared by other agencies. I understand that you have also made requests to the MFAT and MoD relating to AUKUS and refer you to their responses.

You may also want to check the websites of both MFAT and MoD for information about AUKUS that has been made publicly available. This includes many of the documents also shared with DPMC. In particular, I draw your attention to the publications on MoD's website at: www.defence.govt.nz/publications. Additional information is also available in the response to another request on MFAT's website at: www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/OIA/OIA-2024/OIA-29100-AUKUS-8-April-2024.pdf.

The following DPMC documents have been identified as in scope of your request:

The draft document noted above relating to the meeting held on 7 February 2024. This document is withheld in full under the following sections of the Act:

- section 6(a), to protect the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of New Zealand.

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

The runsheet for the briefing of the Governor-General held on 10 October 2023 is relevant in part to your request. Given only one item from this runsheet is relevant to your request, under section 16(1)(e), I am releasing the relevant item from the runsheet to you as an extract as quoted below:

*“Briefing to the Governor General, 10 October 2023...
1430, AUKUS, CDF and SECDEF to lead”.*

Also identified as relevant to your request are some briefings provided by the DPMC Policy Advisory Group to the Prime Minister. These briefings are provided to the Prime Minister in confidence to support him in his role as leader of the Government and chair of Cabinet. These briefings are withheld in their entirety under the following sections of the Act:

- section 6(a), to protect the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of New Zealand.
- 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.

Where section 9 of the Act applies, 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 outweigh the reasons for withholding that information.

You are entitled to ask the Ombudsman to review this response under section 28(3) of the Act.

This response will be published on DPMC’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



Bridget White
Executive Director
National Security Group