



17 June 2025



Ref: OIA-2024/25-0910

Tēnā koe ,

Official Information Act request relating to the Appointment of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request, the following parts of which were transferred to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) for response on 19 May 2025:

"[1] Any and all correspondence/briefings/presentations/notes/interactions/input with DPMC putting John Roche forward as a candidate for the Prime Minister's chief science adviser. This information should show who/which agency or body nominated Dr Roche, and any supporting material.

[2] After the nomination, please provide any correspondence / briefings / presentations / notes / interactions / meeting minutes and agendas about Dr Roche's nomination/candidacy for the role. This should include, but not be limited to, decision-makers / appointment panel discussing the merits or otherwise of his appointment, experience, and the timing of any announcement, plus meeting minutes and/or agendas for these discussions."

The present response covers material solely held by DPMC. Since you have made your request to the Prime Minister's Office, I refer you to their response for the decision on any material held by the Prime Minister.

Appointment of the PMCSA

Following a [review of the science system](#) in 2024, the Government established the [Prime Minister's Science, Innovation and Technology Advisory Council](#) (PMSITAC). The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) supports PMSITAC, and oversaw the appointment process of the Council's inaugural members, including their nomination and selection.

As part of that process, Dr John Roche was successfully nominated by MBIE for the Council. Based on a related recommendation from the review of the science system that the Council and PMCSA have links, it was considered appropriate for the PMCSA appointee to be selected from the successful PMSITAC nominees. Cabinet subsequently noted the Prime Minister's intention to make all appointments to the PMSITAC, including the appointment of the holder of the PMCSA as Deputy Chair.

The PMCSA is a public servant, covered by a part-time secondment agreement between DPMC and the appointee's home agency (the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI)). The appointment was formalised as an agreement between Dr Roche, MPI's Chief Executive, and DPMC's Chief Executive, and was conducted in accordance with DPMC's established secondment procedures (rather than a nomination in the traditional sense).

Information to be withheld

Any discussions regarding the merits of Dr Roche's appointment to the PMCSA role and his experience were part of DPMC's usual due diligence checks. Details of these discussions are withheld under section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act, to protect the free and frank expression of opinions during the decision-making process.

The secondment process also gathered information of an administrative and operational nature. As this pertains to Dr Roche's personal information, I have decided to withhold this in full under section 9(2)(a) of the Act to protect his privacy.

Regarding the timing and nature of the announcement of Dr Roche's appointment, DPMC engaged with the Prime Minister's Office to advise them of the successful completion of the secondment process. This included logistical discussions to determine the appropriate time to communicate the appointment publicly in coordination with other Government announcements.

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 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, na,



Janine Smith
**Deputy Chief Executive
Policy**