



8 July 2025

[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Ref: OIA-2024/25-1010

Dear [Redacted]

Official Information Act request relating to the OIA Rapid performance assessment

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 26 June 2025. You requested:

The Ombudsman published the following report about DPMC:

<https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/sites/default/files/2025-03/OIA%20timeliness%20obligations%20-%20Department%20of%20Prime%20Minister%20and%20Cabinet%20Te%20Tari%20o%20te%20Pirimia%20me%20te%20Komiti%20Matua.pdf>

The report references an internal OIA review: "The timeliness of the Department's responses to OIA requests was the subject of an internal review conducted by the agency in mid-2022, titled the 'OIA rapid performance Assessment' (the internal OIA review)" Page 11, Paragraph 6.

Under the OIA, please supply a copy of the OIA Rapid Performance Assessment. For completeness, feel free to redact the names of any individuals named in the report.

I have decided to release the document to you in full and this is enclosed here. While the Ombudsman has referred to this as the OIA Rapid Performance Assessment, I can confirm the enclosed document is the relevant rapid assessment report into performance.

Statistics relating to compliance with OIA timeframes are published regularly by the Public Service Commission. You may wish to review performance statistics at the link below to gain further understanding of performance for the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) and across government.

[OIA statistics - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)

I can advise that DPMC operates in a continuous improvement environment, and we are pleased that our OIA performance has improved since this rapid assessment was completed. Our most recent reporting shows 100% of requests were completed on time for the period 1 July 2024 to 31 December 2024. Reporting for the period 1 January 2025 to 30 June 2025 is currently undergoing final assurance checks and we are unable to confirm our performance statistic currently. This will be reported to the PSC in early August and full statistics will be published shortly thereafter.

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 DPMC 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



Memorandum

ASSESSMENT OF DPMC OIA RESPONSE RESULTS JAN-JUN 2022

To	Brook Barrington	Prepared by	Katrina Casey, Hamish Rogers
From	Katrina Casey	Date	6 September 2022

Purpose

1. This assessment considers the drivers of the DPMC OIA performance between January and June 2022; how performance is tracking since June 2022; actions being taken to improve performance; and where further action is required. This assessment also provides the basis from which speaking points can be drawn.

What were the dimensions of the Performance?

Performance meeting OIA timeframes January June 2022

2. The summary performance for January to June 2022 was:

	Late	Not Late
DPMC	13.29% (46)	86.71% (300)
NEMA	11.11% (1)	88.89% (8)
Total	13.24% (47)	86.76% (308)

3. There were 355 OIAs in this period, 47 of which were late against the legislative timeframe. Of these, 46 were in core DPMC and 1 in NEMA.
4. The result of 86.76% is DPMCs lowest performance rating of the available reporting periods since 2015/16. The next lowest was 91.5% and 91.7% in July-June (full year) 2016/17 and January-June 2018/19. The highest level was recorded as 99.2% in January-June 2019/20. The usual rate to date sits between 95% and 97%.

Volume of Correspondence

5. Total volumes of **all forms** of correspondence (all DPMC/NEMA) were 1739 for 2020/21 and increased to 3484 in 2021/22. This was an increase from 1255 for the 2019/2020 year.
6. In 2020/21 the volume of OIAs was 393 compared to 753 in 2021/22. Apart from the two years 2015/16 and 2016/17, volumes did not reach higher than 150 in any six-month period until the July-December period in 2020/21.

7. For the core DPMC, the volume of Department OIAs between January and June 2022 was less than the preceding six months (July-December 2021) – 330 vs 461. The volume of ministerial OIAs was also lower than the previous period – 291 vs 381.
8. Across all correspondence types for DPMC and NEMA, the total volume in January-June 2022 period was less than the preceding six months (July-December) – 1657 vs 1827.
9. The biggest drop during the year across all correspondence types was the COVID-19 Group which went from 755 to 463 from the first six months to the period in question. NSG stayed stable, the HTU reduced from 130 to 92 while the Child Wellbeing and Poverty Reduction Group went from 107 – 234.
10. The performance for the period July-December 2021 was 96.4%. This was a higher performance with higher volumes than for the period January-June 2022.

Performance of DPMC Groups

11. Three Groups (setting aside NEMA due to low volumes) were responsible for the lateness in January-June 2022. These were:

	Percentage late	Average number of days late
COVID-19	25.36	22.36
NSG	17.50	05.86
SGE* (small number late)	03.64	15.33 (impacted by 1 that was 39 days late)

12. In the preceding period the HTU had the highest percentage of OIAs late at 28.59%, COVID-19 had 10.24% and NSG 9.52%. Cabinet Office, PAG and SGE also had late responses. All Groups except COVID-19, NSG and SGE reduced their late responses to OIAs to zero for the January-June 2022 period. The fact that most Groups in DPMC did not meet the required timeframes in the previous period indicates that all groups need to focus on this matter.
13. There is a high use of extensions with 40.17% of all OIA being extended in this period. Five Groups used extensions. COVID-19 (57.97%), NSG (55.00%), Cabinet Office (29.03%), Policy Advisor Group (25.00%), SGE (18.8%).
14. It has not been possible to get data that would show where in the process delays occurred i.e., how many days were taken up front and back end by the Ministerials Team, how many days by the relevant Group. It was also not possible to determine the number of days triage at the front end took, or days taken to achieve sign-off by managers, nor the complexity of that in Groups (e.g., multiple signoffs).

Ministerial Services Staffing Figures (data prefaced by HR as not being reliable)

- 15. The Ministerial Services Team had 7.56FTE (8 staff) in January 2020 made up of 2 Fixed term and 6 permanent staff. For the period January – June 2022 the Unit had 8.6FTE (9 staff) made up of 5 Fixed Term and 4 permanent staff.
- 16. In the 2021-year 3 staff were offboarded and 4 onboarded. In 2022 1 staff member was offboarded and 2 staff onboarded.
- 17. Total sick leave in this Unit peaked at 40.88 days in the July-December 2020 period. This was followed by 36.875 days in the January-June 2021 period. In July – December 2021, 11.19 days sick leave was taken and in the period January-June 2022 a total of 19.87 days was taken.
- 18. The period January-June 2022 had the highest annual leave taken with a total of 118.12 days. In January-June 2021, 115.2 days were taken and in January-June 2020 87.2 days. In the period preceding the current one 65 days were taken, with 94 taken July-December 2020.

What was the OIA Performance in July/August 2022?

- 19. Performance for July-August 2022 is reported as 98%, a considerable improvement on January-June 2022. This shows a volume of 101 OIAs for two months versus 291 for the preceding six-month period. Two percent were late. Extrapolating the volume from July/August and allowing for December not being a full month suggests the volumes might turn out roughly similar. There is a risk they could go higher.
- 20. The performance for July and August was:

Month	Late	On Time	Timeliness
July	1	45	97.8%
August	1	56	98.2%
Total	2	101	98.0%

What were the drivers of the Performance?

What do the figures by themselves tell us?

- 21. Both volumes and performance were lower January-June 2022 than in July to December 2021. Performance between January and March 2022 in core DPMC was an average 26.17 days and in NEMA 35 days. This performance had reduced significantly to 21.19 days for core DPMC and 22.2 days for NEMA by June 2022. There were 186 OIAs between January and March falling to 160 by the end of June. **Performance improved by the end of the period (but volume dropped in the final quarter).**
- 22. Anecdotal comment has been made about an increase in the complexity of OIAs but there is no available data to test this. The best way to test complexity would be for a (random) sample of OIAs across similar periods to be assessed.

23. NSG had extensions for 55% of their OIAs in this period, were late with 17.5% of their total responses but were on average only late by 5.86 days. **NSG responses on average need to only make up 5.86 days to become on time.**
24. The COVID-19 Group were late with 25% of responses by an average of 22 days. Volumes dropped in the last quarter and measures are being taken to address issues. **Alongside Ministerial Services the COVID-19 Group is the part of DPMC/NEMA that has the biggest performance gain to achieve and what happens there will have the biggest impact on DPMC Performance for the near future.**
25. Compared to the preceding six months, Ministerial Services staff sick leave was higher but only by a total of 8.5 days, and annual leave was higher by 53 days. An additional position was added to the Unit in January 2022. The mix was 5 fixed term and 4 permanent staff, a pattern of employment type that has been in place since sometime after June 2021. The figures do not indicate high turnover over the last six months. **Staff sickness, leave and turnover figures for this period are not a significant reason for lateness given an additional staff member was added at the beginning of the period, and volumes were less than the previous period.**
26. In the time available it was not possible to investigate the staff numbers, sick and annual leave of the staff in each of the Groups who deal with official correspondence, or managers who are responsible for signoffs. Turnover across DPMC ranged from 14 to 22% during the six-month period and sick leave across the Department also trended upwards although that would need to be compared with the same period in 2021. NSG have advised that their staff were hit hard during this period with COVID-19 illness including a lingering impact on the ability of staff to work.
27. As there is no data available on where the delays lie in the process it is not possible to determine what impact staff issues across the board has had on responsiveness to OIAs. Anecdotal comment does point to capability issues which may be across the board when considering responsiveness to official correspondence.

Cumulative Impact of higher volumes

28. If the data is taken at face value isolating the last six-month period does not explain the decrease in responsiveness to OIAs. The volumes were lower than in the preceding six months. It is not known whether there was a change in complexity or where in the process delays occurred. However, the explanation may in fact lie in the preceding six months and in considering the 2021/22 year.
29. It seems more likely that the effort staff and managers made in the period July-December 2021 across all official correspondence was significant and unable to be fully sustained in the second half of the year. A volume increase from 1739 in 2020/21 to 3484 in 2021/22 represents close to doubling the correspondence without adding significant resources. This includes increases in department OIAs from 412 to 791, Ministerial OIAs from 294 to 672 and WPQs from 507 to 1157.

Systems and Processes

30. It is clear there are issues in being able to easily locate data to be able to track and take preventative measures to stop unnecessary delays in the process. Most of the data available has been collated manually and with that comes risk. While drafting this paper, the dataset changed in the space of a couple of days due to incorrect recording. Data that should

be readily available is not and this affects the ability to determine where in the process issues are and who needs to do what to fix it.

31. It is recognised there is a systems issue and SGE advise that in its view MOTO needs to be enhanced or replaced. At this time no business requirements have been determined for CASS IT to assess what an appropriate solution would be and therefore what the funding required would be.
32. Before a systems solution is assessed, business processes need to be clearly mapped. This mapping needs to include the interfaces in the process between Ministerial Services and the Groups and the processes each Group uses – these appear to be different in each group and it may be possible to streamline. This needs to include mapping of quality assurance, decision making and sign-off processes as well as responsibilities for each part of the process. It should be possible to record the number of days each part of the process is taking in real time, with active thresholds triggered to get more attention from managers at the time. That would also assist to identify where individual staff or managers need more support, training, or active performance management.

Capability

33. It can be challenging to assess the capability of staff and managers either in Ministerial Services or in the respective DPMC Groups if the processes and systems for the function are not clearly identified alongside roles and responsibilities. This also applies to the makeup of the skills and experience needed within both Ministerial Services and the Groups.
34. The split between generalist and specialist staff in Ministerial Services could be assessed, as could whether there is a need for a more senior role within Ministerial Services to support the Manager. It is not a strong medium-term position to have more fixed term than permanent staff in a team that is not temporary.
35. Comments made, indicate a particular area of friction is the interface between Ministerial Services and the Groups. A smooth interface is a critical part of the process and issues seem to be occurring on both sides indicating a potential priority for capability building.
36. In the Groups, responsibilities for parts of the official correspondence need to be clearly identified in position descriptions and processes clearly outlines in induction, with further training available to support any capability gaps. Care should be taken in Groups when considering replicating roles that exist in the Ministerial Services team, but it is likely in the larger Groups with high volumes – currently COVID-19 and NSG that some measures are needed (paragraphs 41-45).

Visibility of Performance and Decisions on Priorities

37. Part of looking at the processes is the very first phase when a piece of correspondence is received – there should be thresholds for triaging fast decisions around transfers and extensions. To support the triaging of correspondence at the front end there also needs to be a prioritisation framework and a call made against criteria as to the complexity of correspondence.
38. It is not clear that there is enough visibility during the process for managers or an escalation path to second tier leaders – before an OIA gets too far into the process. This is a combination of what senior staff in the Ministerial Unit should be doing and the responsibilities set within Groups. While lessons can be learnt after the fact, processes

should be designed to prevent or minimise the likelihood that official correspondence will be late.

39. Prioritisation decisions between different categories of correspondence would benefit from discussion at ELT on the recommendation of SGE and designed into the processes and support. There should be a clear set of priorities, if change is required the rationale for change impact of change and other solutions considered should be discussed at ELT. An example is that deprioritising proactive releases could affect the time responding to OIAs takes Wider discussion and ownership of these decisions and their implications may lead to other solutions being put in place.

Other factors

40. NSG also advise that it had issues accessing classified material onsite during the Parliament Protest earlier in the year. It also advised that it generally had a significant increase in its overall workload during this six-month period and that had a direct impact on responsiveness to OIAs.

Work Underway to Improve the Performance?

41. The COVID-19 and NSG Groups have put measure sin place to improve performance on their parts of the process.
42. For the COVID-19 Group measures include strengthening the tracking, quality assurance, and co-ordination of OIAs and proactive releases. This is in addition to increased oversight for the complex or high-risk correspondence. Reporting is weekly to the DCE COVID-19 Group and Ministerial Services is proactively contacted as correspondence is going through the system and getting closer to due dates. OIAs and proactive releases are discussed at fortnightly meetings with the Minister's office. Increased focus on regular proactive releases of briefings cabinet papers and minutes to reduce workload for OIA's.
43. The COVID-19 Group has increased its focus on the interface with Ministerial Services and has a dedicated inbox for the Ministerial Services team to engage with the Group on, ensuring it is not dependent on one person and minimises the risk of a single point of failure.
44. The NSG Group is taking similar steps and has employed an Advisor, Business Enablement, to identify correct SMEs at time of commissioning, assisting where responses involve classified material, undertaking a rigorous review of proposed responses, and identifying items that risk being delayed.
45. NSG will prepare its own OIA report, identifying imminent responses and their bottle necks, as well as an NSG-specific OIA process document. Like the OIA advisor within the COVID-19 group, the new role proactively engages with the Ministerial Services team regarding workflows and issues. OIAs have more visibility within the Group, being discussed within teams, and during meetings with people leaders.
46. The Ministerial Services team will develop and support monthly reports to ELT on OIA performance in the context of official correspondence. The Acting Director SGE will investigate the capability needs of the Ministerial Services Team and at the same time will assess the support required. SGE has recruited a new Manager of Ministerial Services who will be asked to look at the team's capability, management of workloads and workflow and support. That also provides an opportunity for a fresh assessment of the issues and

developing a prioritised plan to address them.

Further Work?

47. The suggested work on process mapping, developing business requirements and investigating stronger systems solutions should be commissioned. Given every core public service agency has a Ministerial Services function and some form of systems and processes there is unlikely to be a need to develop anything from a zero base.
48. Data quality is an issue that will remain while much of it is manual, but while it is collated from a range of places, attention still needs to be paid to its quality, whatever the form of collection.
49. Further work could be done to ensure that senior leaders are across complex official correspondence and can intervene while the process is in flight. This requires transparency within Groups and from Ministerial Services, and as it is often a judgement call may require enhanced capability. All Groups need to ensure their staff, at all levels, appropriately prioritise OIAs despite competing demands.
50. It would also be useful to look at two aspects of the process when new Groups are established in DPMC. The first being an assessment of the nature and timing of the impact on official correspondence and any identified resourcing. The second is the time taken by the Ministerial Services team to ensure the new Group is aware of the official correspondence processes and systems and the associated roles and responsibilities. This would assist to build and maintain the interface between the Ministerial Services team and the new Group.

Key Points in Summary


51. An OIA response rate of 86.6% does not meet either the required standard or the standard DPMC aspires to achieve. It is the lowest rate DPMC has ever achieved by quite some margin.
52. DPMCs volumes of official correspondence effectively doubled during one year. Staff did an extraordinary job in the face of the increase for the first half of the year but could not sustain that effort for the second half of the year.
53. DPMC systems, processes and capability did not support the significant increase in volume of official correspondence and the priority went into responding to correspondence which led to processes and system issues not being identified or addressed – the more pressure that went on, the more exposed this was and the more reliant DPMC became on the effort and capability of individual staff.
54. Most Groups in DPMC had OIAs that were late during the first half of 2021/22, but most had no late OIAs in the last part of the year.
55. NSG and the COVID-19 Group were the exceptions, as was SGE (small number). NSG was on average only late by just over 5 days which given 55% of its OIAs were extended should be possible to claw back. The COVID-19 Group had a larger volume and a larger average day's late rate, but its volumes had begun to drop by the end of the period. Both Groups are taking tangible steps to address the issues.

- 56. Improvements have been identified to processes and systems and associated quality of data, and there will be a renewed focus on capability and the active management of the interface between Ministerial Services and each Group.
- 57. Performance in the first two months of 2022/23 is strong with a rate of 98% continuing the trend from the final quarter of the year. Reporting to ELT has been changed from quarterly to monthly which will assist earlier identification of issues and discussion of any actions needed.
- 58. All second-tier leaders need to ensure they have solid processes including escalation paths to themselves should issues begin to occur, including helping managers to prioritise competing demands.

Recommendations

I recommend that you:

- (a) **note** that this memorandum has been put together rapidly and there are likely to be some data issues and the assessment has not been tested with ELT members.
- (b) **note** that while attention is still required to this area, DPMC and NEMA have made a very strong start to 2022/23.
- (c) **note** that this memo has been provided to the Acting Executive Director SGE/Director Communications to draw together key points for communication response when the results are released.

 Katrina Casey	NOTED
Executive Director Implementation Unit	Brook Barrington
6/09/2022	Chief Executive DPMC .../.../...

Released under the Official Information Act 1982