



CABINET OFFICE

4 August 2025



Ref: OIA-2024/25-1022

Tēnā koe [redacted]

Official Information Act request: Correspondence regarding the cabinet manual

On 2 July, you requested:

Can the Cabinet Office please release all correspondence to Ministers' offices about the Cabinet Manual information/rules/guidelines? The time period of my request is the current term of Parliament. It's in the public interest to know if ministers are transgressing against the Cabinet Manual or getting close, and requiring warnings, and how often. Please release the information in electronically searchable form and include all email attachments.

We asked you to refine that request and on 10 July you explained:

What I'm after is advice based on ministerial comments and conflicts of interest, please, if it could be narrowed to that. Daily/iterative/general advice should be excluded.

We have interpreted your refined request as being for advice relating to ministerial comments and advice relating to ministerial conflicts of interest, provided by the Cabinet Office during the current term of Parliament.

Refusal of request

I have decided to refuse your request on the basis of section 18(f) of the OIA – the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research. The reasons for that refusal are as follows:

We have consulted with you about the scope of your request, as required by section 18B of the OIA. Your refined request is not limited by date (other than this term of Parliament), Minister, or topic (other than ministerial comments and conflicts generally). The Cabinet Office regularly provides advice to Ministers on conflict of interest matters. That advice occurs:

- following the appointment of a new administration (Cabinet Office meets with all new Ministers for a confidential discussion of conflicts matters);
- as part of regular six-monthly reviews of all Ministers' interests; and
- throughout the year, as conflict of interest issues arise.

We are aware of more than 4,000 documents that would have to be reviewed in order to respond to your request. It is likely that not all of these documents will be in scope

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but we have not been able to narrow the initial search further, given the breadth of the topic. We estimate that review of those documents could take around 160 hours of our time and would impact our ability to carry out our usual work.

We have also considered whether charging or extending the timeframe for responding to your request would help, as required by section 18A of the OIA. However, we do not consider charging to be a practical solution in this context, and our resourcing and workload are unlikely to change within a timeframe that it would be reasonable to extend this request to.

You are of course welcome to submit a new narrower request if that is your preference.

Additional context and publicly available information

I set out below some additional information about the Cabinet Office's role in relation to conflicts, and how related information is usually treated in terms of public release.

The Cabinet Office, on behalf of the Prime Minister, supports Ministers in identifying and managing conflicts of interest. 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 manage them. Ministers are encouraged to seek advice from the Secretary of the Cabinet on a confidential basis. Details regarding conflicts of interest are not generally disclosed, to ensure the confidentiality of Cabinet proceedings, to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs and in some cases to protect personal privacy.

However, some information about Ministers' interests is proactively released on our website. The most recent release is available here: [Ministers' Interests May 2024 - December 2024 | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPMC\)](#). Our website also has other information about how conflicts are identified, managed and made public (including why only some information about conflicts is released).

More information about the Cabinet Office's role in managing conflicts of interest is set out in the Auditor-General's report on "Managing conflicts of interest in the Fast-track Approvals process", available here: [Managing conflicts of interest in the Fast-track Approvals process](#). See in particular paragraphs 2.32-2.34 and 4.51-4.57.

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, nā



Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

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