



2 December 2025

Ref: OIA-2025/26-0310

Tēnā koe [REDACTED],

Official Information Act request relating to the potential gaming of the Government's health targets

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request, which was received by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) on 11 November 2025. You requested:

1. *"All briefings, advice, memos, aide-memoires, cabinet papers, and communication about the gaming of government's 5 health targets between 1 January 2024 and 11 November 2025 (please provide any more recent information within scope of the request at the date the request is fulfilled.)"*
 - a. *The Treasury Report: Supporting Ministerial consultation on the Minister of Health's forthcoming draft Cabinet paper, "Health delivery plan" (Report no T2025/303) makes reference to the gaming of planned care targets and the DPMC flagging concerns:
"The planned care target is already showing some evidence of gaming, with patients on the waitlist for elective surgery who are close to reaching the four-month performance threshold being prioritised for surgery over those who have already been waiting longer than four months. The Delivery Unit in DPMC has flagged concerns here to HNZ and the Ministry of Health"*
2. *Please provide all correspondence, data and reports of evidence of the gaming of planned care targets described above, including all correspondence between the Delivery Unit in DPMC and HNZ and Ministry of Health about the gaming of planned care targets.*
3. *Please provide an overview of what mitigations have been made to avoid further gaming of planned care targets and steps the DPMC is taking to monitor potential gaming."*

On 25 November we notified you of our decision to partially transfer your request to the Ministry of Health and Health New Zealand. The present response covers all material held by DPMC that was not transferred to either of those agencies for response.

Information being released

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the emails listed below, subject to information being withheld as noted under section 9(2)(a) of the Act, to protect the privacy of individuals. A small amount of information is not in scope of your request and is marked accordingly.

Item	Date	Subject	Decision
1	9 December 2024	Meeting Action Notes: Targets 1 & 2 Implementation Planning	Release in part, some information withheld under s9(2)(a).
2	29 October 2025	RE: AOG Targets 1&2 DPMC/MoH Catch-up	Release in part, some information withheld under s9(2)(a).

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, and are withheld in their entirety under the following sections of the Act:

- 9(2)(f)(iv), to maintain the confidentiality of advice tendered by or to Ministers and officials
- 9(2)(g)(i), to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinion.

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, nā



Janine Smith
Deputy Chief Executive, Policy and Delivery Unit

From: [Maari Porter \[DPMC\]](#)
To: [Duncan Bliss](#); [Kirsten Stephenson](#); [Ben McBride \[DPMC\]](#); [Amy Russell \[TSY\]](#); [Shane Hamill \[DPMC\]](#)
Cc: [Simon Medcalf](#); [Dale Bramley](#)
Subject: Meeting Action Notes: Targets 1 & 2 Implementation Planning
Date: Monday, 9 December 2024 11:58:00 am
Attachments: [image001.png](#)


IN-CONFIDENCE UNCLASSIFIED

Kia ora koutou,

Thank you for your meeting last week on Delivery Planning, mitigating unintended consequences/gaming and Auditor General audit.


We discussed the following and agreed actions per below:

Out of Scope



- **Mitigating unintended consequences and gaming** was discussed. Ministry/Te Whatu Ora have, with the support of HQSC, developed a set of balancing measures. We agreed having balancing measures was important and good to see the agencies get ahead of this area. In addition, the Delivery Unit recommended, based on international and previous NZ experience and evidence, for Ministry/Te Whatu Ora to consider bringing in HQSC to provide an active approach (in addition to measures) through an independent assurance/assessment of aspects of the Targets (where gaming/unintended consequences has been a feature either domestically or overseas) that could be provided to those with oversight of the targets in the Ministry/Te Whatu Ora. To be clear, the Delivery Unit just needs assurance that there is a process in place, it is for the agencies to manage and monitor. **Action:** Ministry/Te Whatu Ora agreed to consider and talk with Richard Hamblin about an active assurance role.

Out of Scope



Please let me know if I've missed or mis-represented anything.

With thanks,
Maari

Maari Porter (*she/her*)
Chief Advisor
Delivery Unit
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

M: s9(2)(a)

E: maari.porter@dpmc.govt.nz



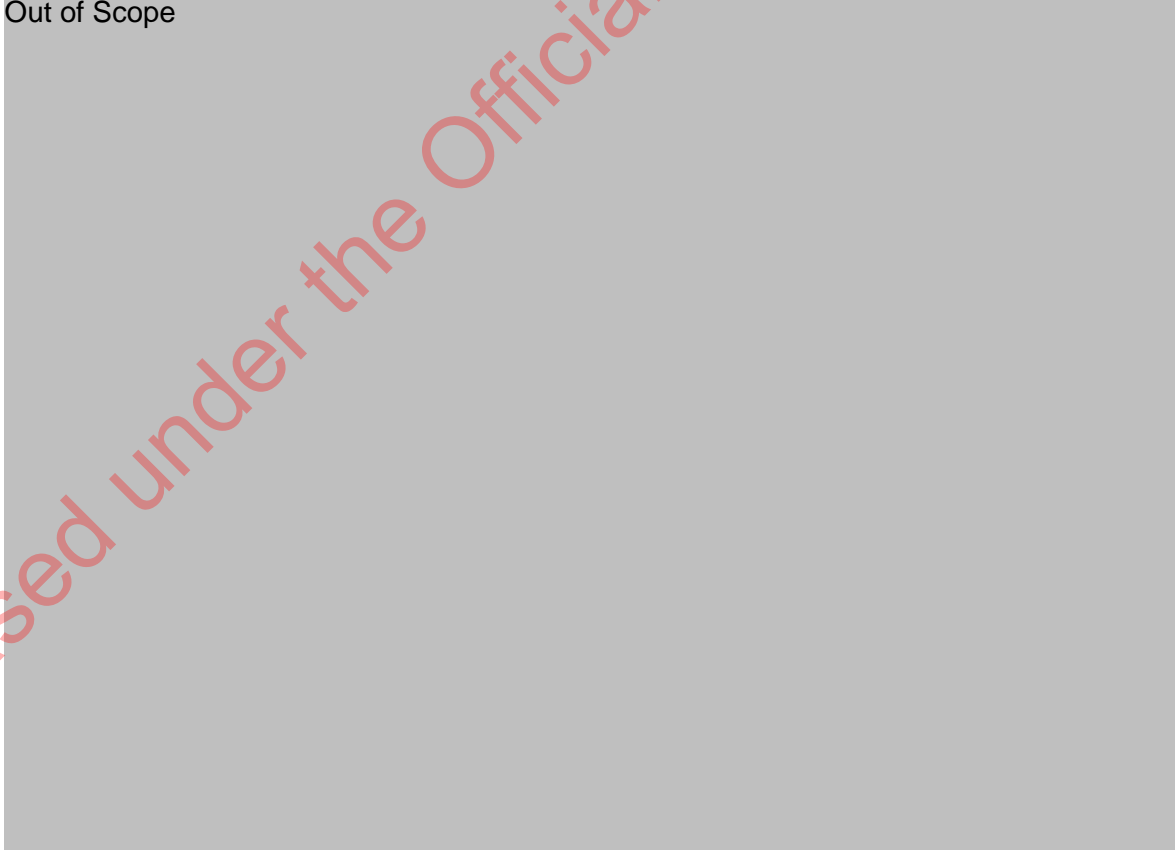
Released under the Official Information Act 1982

From: [Hayden Luscombe](#)
To: [Shane Hamill \[DPMC\]](#)
Cc: [Jane Carpenter](#); [Kirsten Stephenson](#); [Emma Quealey](#); [Maari Porter \[DPMC\]](#); [Pavee Ruksaksakul \[DPMC\]](#)
Subject: RE: AOG Targets 1&2 DPMC/MoH Catch-up
Date: Wednesday, 29 October 2025 4:39:37 pm
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
[image005.png](#)
[image006.png](#)

Hi Shane,

- For Target 2 – is there anything we should be concerned about / highlight regarding the observation “The table below indicates changes in target performance that may be due to potential gaming or changes in waitlist management. This includes reducing the number of patients waiting by either exiting patients untreated or raising the threshold for being added to the waitlist”. Is this something that requires further investigation (or are there satisfactory explanations for what the data is showing ?) **As part of our analysis and monitoring, we queried each of the highlighted increases with HealthNZ who in turn queried the change with local districts / services to look at the causes. In each case it was acknowledged to be related to a model of care change, standard process change or blip. HNZ has reassured us that they do not intend to meet the target by raising thresholds or removing patients from the list.**

Out of Scope



Regards,

Hayden Luscombe (He/Him)
Manager, Monitoring Analytics
Performance and Governance

s 9(2)(a)

Hayden.Luscombe@health.govt.nz
Manatū Hauora, 133 Molesworth Street
Thorndon, Wellington 6011



From: Shane Hamill [DPMC] <Shane.Hamill@dpmc.govt.nz>
Sent: Wednesday, 29 October 2025 8:54 am
To: Hayden Luscombe <Hayden.Luscombe@health.govt.nz>
Cc: Jane Carpenter <Jane.Carpenter@health.govt.nz>; Kirsten Stephenson <Kirsten.Stephenson@health.govt.nz>; Emma Quealey <Emma.Quealey@health.govt.nz>; Maari Porter [DPMC] <Maari.Porter@dpmc.govt.nz>; Pavee Ruksaksakul [DPMC] <Pavee.Ruksaksakul@dpmc.govt.nz>
Subject: RE: AOG Targets 1&2 DPMC/MoH Catch-up
Importance: High

~~IN CONFIDENCE~~ UNCLASSIFIED

Thanks for this Hayden – very useful!

Just a couple of quick follow-ups:

- For Target 2 – is there anything we should be concerned about / highlight regarding the observation “The table below indicates changes in target performance that may be due to potential gaming or changes in waitlist management. This includes reducing the number of patients waiting by either exiting patients untreated or raising the threshold for being added to the waitlist”. Is this something that requires further investigation (or are there satisfactory explanations for what the data is showing?)

Out of Scope

A large grey rectangular redaction box covering the bottom portion of the email content.

Feel free to set up a call if easier.

Nga mihi,
Shane

From: Hayden Luscombe <Hayden.Luscombe@health.govt.nz>
Sent: Tuesday, 21 October 2025 5:38 pm
To: Shane Hamill [DPMC] <Shane.Hamill@dpmc.govt.nz>; Jane Carpenter <Jane.Carpenter@health.govt.nz>; Kirsten Stephenson <kirsten.stephenson@health.govt.nz>; Emma Quealey <Emma.Quealey@health.govt.nz>; Maari Porter [DPMC] <Maari.Porter@dpmc.govt.nz>; Pavee Ruksaksakul [DPMC] <Pavee.Ruksaksakul@dpmc.govt.nz>
Subject: RE: AOG Targets 1&2 DPMC/MoH Catch-up

Kia ora,

Thanks for your time earlier – as discussed attached are the latest Unintended Consequences slides that recently went to Minister Brown as part of our quarterly report.

Out of Scope

Regards,

Hayden Luscombe (He/Him)
Manager, Monitoring Analytics
Performance and Governance

s 9(2)(a)

Hayden.Luscombe@health.govt.nz
Manatū Hauora, 133 Molesworth Street
Thorndon, Wellington 6011



From: Shane Hamill [DPMC] <Shane.Hamill@dpmc.govt.nz>
Sent: Tuesday, 21 October 2025 8:27 am
To: Jane Carpenter <Jane.Carpenter@health.govt.nz>; Kirsten Stephenson <Kirsten.Stephenson@health.govt.nz>; Hayden Luscombe <Hayden.Luscombe@health.govt.nz>; Emma Quealey <Emma.Quealey@health.govt.nz>; Maari Porter [DPMC] <Maari.Porter@dpmc.govt.nz>; Pavee Ruksaksakul [DPMC] <Pavee.Ruksaksakul@dpmc.govt.nz>
Subject: RE: AOG Targets 1&2 DPMC/MoH Catch-up

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Kia ora koutou,

We are looking forward to catching up this afternoon.

Please find below a set of bullets that outline areas we would find useful to discuss / get an update on. Feel free to add anything else you think would be useful.

Reporting

- Out of Scope [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- MoH gaming and unintended consequences report
- Out of Scope [Redacted]

Out of Scope [Redacted]

Nga mihi,
Shane

-----Original Appointment-----

From: Jane Carpenter <Jane.Carpenter@health.govt.nz>
Sent: Friday, 29 August 2025 2:16 pm
To: Jane Carpenter; Kirsten Stephenson; Hayden Luscombe; Emma Quealey; Maari Porter [DPMC]; Pavee Ruksaksakul [DPMC]; Shane Hamill [DPMC]
Subject: AOG Targets 1&2 DPMC/MoH Catch-up
When: Tuesday, 21 October 2025 3:00 pm-4:00 pm (UTC+12:00) Auckland, Wellington.
Where: ROOM WLG GN.2-Display-Semi Public (10); - Ministry of Health

Out of Scope [Redacted]

Released under the Official Information Act 1982