




## EXECUTIVE COUNCIL CHAMBERS

9 December 2025



Ref: OIA-2025/26-0312

Tēnā koe 

**Official Information Act request: All documents relating to the Rt. Hon. Dame Jacinda Ardern, GNZM appointment as a Dame Grand companion to the NZ Order of Merit**

Thank you for your Official Information Act (the Act) request received on 13 November 2025. You requested:

*[A]ll documents, emails, and all other forms of communications e.g. physical written communications, digital and electronic communications or any digitally stored recordings related to the nomination, consideration and formal appointment of ARDERN, The Right Honourable Dame Jacinda Kate Laurell, as Dame Grand Companion to the New Zealand Order of Merit the HIGHEST honour in NZ National Awards system.*

*Please provide all records including copies of all nominations for Ms Ardern.*

*Please include all official and non official records by the Prime Minister at the time Chris Hipkins and any official documents related to how he handled the nominations and recommended Ardern to the Governor General. Please provide any cabine minutes or records of the award being discussed in cabinet and which ministers said what.*

*Please provide every single record with a detailed timeline and summary of what was happening or what was going on from the moment the official recommendation came through. Basically provide everything you are legally able to and exhaust all efforts.*

I have interpreted your request to be for all information held by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) relating to the appointment of The Right Honourable Dame Jacinda Ardern as a Dame Grand Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for the period until formal announcement of the appointment on 4 June 2023.

### **Response to your request**

The Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern was appointed by the King to be a Dame Grand Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit, for services to the State, as part of the King's Birthday and Coronation Honours List 2023. Appointment as a Dame Grand Companion of the

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New Zealand Order of Merit (GNZM) is one of the most senior levels of honour within the New Zealand Royal Honours system. The citation which sets out the basis on which the appointment was made is publicly available on the website of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet at <https://www.dPMC.govt.nz/honours/lists/kb2023-gnzm#ardernja>.

I note for completeness that the GNZM is not New Zealand's most senior honour – our most senior honour is the Order of New Zealand (ONZ).

In response to your request, I provide the following description of the process leading to Dame Jacinda Ardern's appointment in 2023.

The formal responsibility for making recommendations to The King for the grant of honours rests with the Prime Minister of the day. Twice a year the Prime Minister, with the assistance of the Cabinet Appointments and Honours Committee (APH), considers nominations from which a shortlist is made for submission to The King. Further information on the honours process is available on the DPMC website at [New Zealand Royal Honours | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPMC\)](#).

Ahead of the King's Birthday and Coronation Honours List 2023, APH met on 13 March and 27 March 2023 to consider nominations. The Prime Minister Rt Hon Chris Hipkins then advised the Administrator of the Government (acting in place of the Governor-General who was travelling overseas) to give informal approval to the list.

Subsequently, proposed recipients were asked whether they wished to accept their proposed honour. This is known as "sounding". Once sounding was complete, the Prime Minister advised the King to give formal approval to the list. The list was publicly announced on 4 June 2023, and published on the DPMC website and in the Gazette at [The King's Birthday and Coronation Honours List 2023 - 2023-vr2387- New Zealand Gazette](#).

The Honours Unit holds information relating to the other elements of your request. However, I am withholding this information under the following sections of the Act:

- section 9(2)(a) to protect the privacy of natural persons;
- section 9(2)(ba)(i) to protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence or which any person has been or could be compelled to provide under the authority of any enactment, where the making available of the information would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information, or information from the same source, and it is in the public interest that such information should continue to be supplied;
- section 9(2)(f)(i), to protect the confidentiality of Sovereign communications;
- section 9(2)(f)(ii), to maintain collective ministerial responsibility;
- section 9(2)(f)(iv) to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials; and
- section 9(2)(g)(i) to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers or officials in the course of their duty.

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Protecting the confidentiality of material about Honours nominations and appointments is essential to maintaining the integrity of the New Zealand Royal Honours system. Those engaging with the honours system make nominations with an expectation of privacy and confidentiality. The nominations guidelines on the DPMC website state that *all nominations for honours are treated in the strictest confidence. No information regarding the nominee or the details of the nomination is divulged.* Protection of such information ensures that those engaging with the Honours system can rely on the confidentiality of the process and can continue to supply information knowing their privacy will be protected. The long-standing practice of confidentiality in relation to the various processes of the Honours system also ensures the system is free as possible from litigiousness, recrimination and inappropriate comparison.

In making my decision, in accordance with section 9(1) of the Act, I have considered whether the withholding of the information is outweighed by other considerations which render it desirable, in the public interest, to make the information available. In my view it is not. While transparency and accountability weigh in favour of disclosure, the need to protect the confidentiality and integrity of the Honours process outweighs the interest in disclosure.

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  
**Clerk of the Executive Council**