



CABINET OFFICE

16 December 2025



Ref: OIA-2025/26-0341

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request: Request for advice relating to Melling / RiverLink projects

Thank you for your Official Information Act (the Act) request received on 18 November 2025. You requested:

“Copies of all assessments, correspondence, and records held by the Cabinet Office relating to:

- 1. Any advice provided to Hon Chris Bishop regarding conflicts of interest or perceived conflicts concerning the RiverLink project, the CityLink (Melling) walking and cycling bridge, or related decisions involving his Hutt South electorate.*
- 2. Any Cabinet Office advice previously given to Minister Bishop regarding conflicts of interest in relation to the Melling Interchange project - please include any advice referenced by Minister Bishop in public statements.*
- 3. Any Cabinet Office advice concerning the transfer of Kāinga Ora Infrastructure Acceleration Fund (IAF) money to fund the Melling bridge, including whether such a transfer raised conflict-of-interest issues.*
- 4. Any advice, guidance, or communication between the Cabinet Office, DPMC, or the Prime Minister’s Office regarding whether Minister Bishop should have sought advice or recused himself from decisions involving: amendments to the IAF agreement; the use of Kāinga Ora funds for the CityLink bridge; or the management of conflicts where a Minister is making decisions involving their own electorate.*
- 5. Any advice relating to compliance with the Cabinet Manual as it pertains to Ministers advocating for, or making decisions on, projects located in their own electorate.*

Please include emails, memoranda, meeting notes, text messages (if used for official business), and internal Cabinet Office commentary.

Where a document that falls under scope of this request cannot be released, please supply a summary of that document’s contents. Where any document

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DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

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falls under the scope of this request, please release it in full, including sections which might otherwise be considered out of scope.”

Parts 1, 3 and 4 of your request

The Cabinet Office holds no advice, guidance or communications relevant to parts 1, 3 or 4 of your request. We have interpreted part 4 of your request to include advice relevant only to Hon Bishop (rather than all Ministers), consistent with the chapeau of this part of your request. Those parts of your request are therefore refused under section 18(g) of the Act.

Part 2 of your request

The Cabinet Office holds material that falls within the scope of part 2 of your request and I have decided to release it to you in the form of a summary as permitted by section 16(e) of the Act.

The table below describes the advice given to Hon Bishop relating to the Melling Interchange, which is the advice referred to by Hon Bishop in statements in the House of Representatives.

Date	Description of correspondence and advice
14/12/2023 11:03AM	Email from Cabinet Office to Hon Bishop’s office attaching a draft register of interests for his review. <i>The draft register identified Hon Bishop’s potential perceived conflict of interest if he were to make decisions as a Minister relating to the Melling Interchange, given his advocacy for that project as an MP. It set out the Cabinet Office’s advice to manage that conflict. That advice was that Hon Bishop not make Ministerial decisions in respect of that matter and, if relevant decisions came to Cabinet or Cabinet committee, he declare his previous involvement as an MP and either withdraw from the discussion or seek the agreement of his colleagues to take part. The register was subsequently finalised without any change to that advice.</i>
6/12/2024 11:10AM – 12:59 PM	Email exchange between Cabinet Office and Hon Bishop’s office alerting his office to consider conflicts of interest for upcoming Committee papers, one of which related to the Melling Interchange. <i>The Cabinet Office’s advice on managing Hon Bishop’s conflict of interest relating to the Melling Interchange did not change.</i>
13/02/2025 11:13AM	Email from Cabinet Office to Hon Bishop’s office providing an updated interests register. <i>Following Hon Bishop’s appointment as the Minister of Transport, the Cabinet Office advised Hon Bishop that he manage his conflict of interest by no longer advocating as an MP in respect of the Melling Interchange. Instead, he would act a Minister in relation to the Melling Interchange. Further, if decisions about Melling Interchange were to come to Cabinet or Cabinet committee, Hon Bishop should declare his interest (i.e. that the decision relates to his electorate and is something he had previously advocated in respect of).</i>

11/08/2025 3:32PM	Email from Cabinet Office to Hon Bishop's office providing an updated interests register. <i>The wording of the management plan was amended slightly, but the substance of the Cabinet Office's advice did not change.</i>
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Part 5 of your request

We have interpreted this part of your request as seeking the Cabinet Office's advice to individual Ministers about conflicts of interest relating to projects in their electorates, outside of the more general guidance set out in the Cabinet Manual. The Cabinet Office holds information in scope of this part of your request. I have decided to withhold this information in full, except to the extent already summarised under our response to part 2 of your request, under the following sections of the Act:

- section 9(2)(ba)(ii), to protect information that is subject to an obligation of confidence, where making the information available would damage the public interest;
- section 9(2)(f)(iv), to maintain the confidentiality of advice tendered by or to Ministers and officials;
- section 9(2)(g)(i), to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinion.

In making the decision on part 5 of your request, in accordance with section 9(1) of the Act, I have considered whether the public interest in disclosure outweighs the need to withhold the information, I have concluded that it does not. This is because 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 this information and provide advice to Ministers on how to resolve them.

The Cabinet Office proactively releases some information about the management of ministerial conflicts, including constituency conflicts, which might also be of interest to you. This information covers transfers of responsibility and arrangements not to receive papers. These releases are published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website, available at [Ministers' interests management | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet \(DPMC\)](#).

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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