



13 January 2026

Ref: OIA-2025/26-0275

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

Tēnā koe [Redacted]

### Official Information Act request relating to continuity of government in the event of a major disaster in Wellington

Thank you for your request made under the Official Information Act (the Act), received by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) on 29 October 2025. You requested:

*“All documents, plans and guides held by DPMC on continuity/relocation of government in the event of a major disaster in Wellington.*

*I request all documents and plans held by DPMC, including but not limited to, preparations and plans for the relocation of the Executive, as well as the continued operation of executive decision-making, and procedures in the event of the Prime Minister or any other Minister's incapacitation or death.”*

On 11 November 2025, we wrote to you and advised that we had understood your request for all documents held by DPMC to be for final versions of formal documents, plans or guides. We explained that DPMC held a copy of the June 2014 Parliamentary Service document “*Emergency Relocation of Executive Government and Parliament Plan*” but withheld this document and referred you to the Parliamentary Service.

Your request was also transferred in part to the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) for the plan being drafted by DIA for continuance of government in the event of a major disaster in Wellington.

As we had transferred their plan to DIA and referred you to the Parliamentary Service for their 2014 plan, this response covers final (formal) DPMC documents in scope of your request.

### Information being released

Please find attached DPMC documents we have identified as being in scope of your request, as set out in the table below.

Item	Date	Title of document	Decision
Item 1	12/02/2025	Catastrophic Event Readiness Steering Committee: Terms of Reference.  [Note additional text has been added in relation to the Cabinet Office having a critical role in the continuity of executive government]	Released in full

Item	Date	Title of document	Decision
Item 2	18/02/2025	New Zealand Catastrophic Readiness Workstream Leads Meeting Record of Meeting	Some information withheld under: s6(a) s9(2)(f)(iv) s9(2)(g)(ii)
Item 3	March 2025	Ensuring continuity of government: Strengthening government resilience for a catastrophic event that significantly impacts leadership and functions in Wellington  [A3 provided to the Public Service Leadership Team (PSLT), the Prime Minister, and the Speaker of the House]	Released in full
Item 4	16/04/2025	Catastrophic Readiness Workstreams  [DPMC Briefing to the Prime Minister]	Some information withheld under: s9(2)(f)(iv)
Item 5	12/05/2025	Catastrophic Event Readiness Steering Committee Minutes	Some information withheld under: s6(a) s9(2)(f)(iv) s9(2)(g)(i) s9(2)(g)(ii)
Item 6		Strengthening government readiness for a catastrophic event impacting Wellington  [Letter from the Prime Minister to Ministers]	Some information withheld under: s9(2)(f)(iv)
Item 7	19/09/2025	Catastrophic Event Readiness: Update and Next Steps.  [Letter from DPMC to PSLT]	Released in full

### Information withheld in full

Also identified as relevant to your request are some briefings provided by the DPMC's 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. These briefings are withheld in their entirety under the following sections of the Act:

- section 9(2)(f)(ii), to maintain collective and individual ministerial responsibility
- 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.

### Continued operation of executive decision-making

Regarding the last part of your request about documents and plans for the "...continued operation of executive decision-making, and procedures in the event of the Prime Minister or any other Minister's incapacitation or death."

The Cabinet Manual provides useful guidance on the conventions and procedures for the continuation of executive decision-making that would apply following the incapacitation or

death of a Prime Minister or Minister. The Cabinet Manual is available on the DPMC website at: [www.dPMC.govt.nz/our-business-units/cabinet-office/supporting-work-cabinet/cabinet-manual](http://www.dPMC.govt.nz/our-business-units/cabinet-office/supporting-work-cabinet/cabinet-manual).

### **Incapacitation or death of a Prime Minister**

In the event of a Prime Minister's incapacitation or death, the Deputy Prime Minister would act as Prime Minister in a temporary capacity until the leadership of the government is determined<sup>1</sup>.

The Governor-General would appoint a new Prime Minister, accepting the outcome of the political process by which an individual is identified as the leader of the government<sup>2</sup>.

### **Incapacitation or death of a Minister**

Section 7 of the Constitution Act 1986 provides that any function, duty, or power of any Minister of the Crown may, unless the context otherwise requires, be performed by any member of the Executive Council. The Constitution Act 1986 is available on the legislation website at: [www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1986/0114/latest/DLM94204.html](http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1986/0114/latest/DLM94204.html).

The flexibility of section 7 means that if a Minister is incapacitated or dies whilst in office, other Ministers can act for them<sup>3</sup>. The Prime Minister may ask a Minister to carry out the responsibilities of the portfolio until a formal appointment is made or (in the case of incapacitation) the Minister is able to return to ministerial duties<sup>4</sup>.

If an Associate Minister is incapacitated or dies whilst in office, the portfolio Minister would take up any delegated responsibilities, unless arrangements have been made for another Minister to act as the Associate Minister<sup>5</sup>.

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



Jeremy Clarke-Watson  
**Deputy Chief Executive**  
**National Security and Resilience Group**

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<sup>1</sup> Cabinet Manual 2023, 6.57.

<sup>2</sup> Cabinet Manual 2023, 6.56.

<sup>3</sup> Cabinet Manual 2023, 2.21(a).

<sup>4</sup> Cabinet Manual 2023, 2.42.

<sup>5</sup> Cabinet Manual 2023, 2.44.

## Catastrophic Event Readiness Steering Committee

### Terms of Reference

#### Purpose

1. The purpose of the Catastrophic Event Readiness Steering Committee is to ensure there is effective coordination across the array of catastrophic event planning workstreams.

#### Background

2. In November 2022 NEMA led an inter-agency workshop with the purpose of developing a national catastrophic response plan. Readiness activity was initiated in response to the potential for an earthquake on the Hikurangi Subduction Zone, resulting in a tsunami which would have a catastrophic impact on Wellington.
3. New Zealand is susceptible to a number of natural hazard events that could cause a catastrophic event including volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis. A catastrophic event is characterised by devastating physical and social impacts on thousands of people across multiple regions. It will be beyond our current arrangements, thinking, experience and imagination and will degrade or disable governance structures and strategic and operational decision-making functions. Catastrophic events differ from emergencies in that they exceed BAU emergency management systems and capability design parameters. Overseas experience is that crisis plans cannot be scaled up; a catastrophic event requires its own planning.
4. Since 2022, a suite of catastrophic readiness activity has been underway, including:
  - Catastrophic Event Planning (NEMA);
  - Alternative National Crisis Management Centre (aNCMC) (NEMA);
  - Alternative leadership in Auckland and Executive Government Hub (APO);
  - Continuity of Executive Government (DIA);
  - Continuity of Parliament - Office of the Clerk (OOC);
  - Alternative ODESC Arrangements (DPMC); and
  - Government Business Continuity Arrangements (Inter-Agency).
5. Convening a light touch Steering Committee will ensure that the activities are joined up, that appropriate mandates are in place, and that gaps and risks (including opportunities) are escalated to the National Hazards Board (NHB) for governance and oversight.

#### Objectives

6. The objectives of the Steering Committee will be to:
  - Maintain situational awareness across the workstreams (overview attached in Annex A);
  - Ensure appropriate mandates are in place and accountabilities are appropriately aligned with agency roles and responsibilities;

- Ensure synchronisation of workstream milestones where appropriate;
- Maximise opportunities for collaboration as well as de-confliction;
- Identify dependencies and gaps; and
- Ensure risks and issues are identified and where necessary, escalated to the appropriate decision-making authority.

## Membership

7. The Steering Committee will be made up of senior officials from the following agencies:
- Auckland Policy Office (APO) – Alternative leadership in Auckland and Executive Government Hub;
  - DPMC:
    - Cabinet Office – Constitutional arrangements, [Note: Cabinet Office also has a critical role with the continuity of executive government]
    - RSGG - AOG Strategic Coordination, Alternative ODESC Arrangements Plan;
  - DIA – Continuity and Delivery of Executive Government;
  - MBIE – Government System Continuity Arrangements;
  - NEMA – Lead Agency, Catastrophic Planning Programme, and Alternative NCMC;
  - OOC (supported by PS) – Continuity of Parliament; and
  - PSC – Oversight of the effective delivery of government services.
8. Others. Other subject matter experts will be invited 'on-a-required' basis such as:
- NZDF – Logistical support; and
  - Police – Rule of law and Protective Services

## Responsibilities

9. Members of the Steering Committee have several responsibilities:
- Providing coordinated advice to the National Hazards Board (NHB) to enable Government's readiness to respond to a catastrophic event;
  - Maintaining oversight across all their agency's catastrophic event planning and activity;
  - Providing progress updates to the Committee and keeping their agency informed about other workstream activity;
  - Ensuring risk registers are maintained for their agencies' activities; and
  - Quickly surfacing issues/gaps/opportunities when identified.

## Governance

10. The Steering Committee<sup>1</sup> is responsible to the National Hazards Board (NHB); the Executive Director, Risk and Systems Governance Group, DPMC, is the sponsor of this committee.

## Meetings

11. Meetings will be chaired by the Executive Director of the Risk and Systems Governance Group, DPMC. The frequency of meetings and the lifespan of the committee will be determined at the initial meeting of the committee and once the scope of its work is clearly understood.

## Secretariat Support

12. DPMC's Strategic Crisis Management Unit will provide secretariat support for Steering Committee meetings. SCMU will:

- Be responsible for administrative arrangements;
- Convene agency workstream leads to maintain an overview of activities and assist in triaging issues for the Steering Committee;
- Maintain a high-level risk register to support the Steering Committee in maintaining oversight of risks that collectively impact workstreams or threaten the ability of individual workstreams to achieve their objectives;
- Prepare coordinated advice on behalf of the Steering Committee to NHB if required.

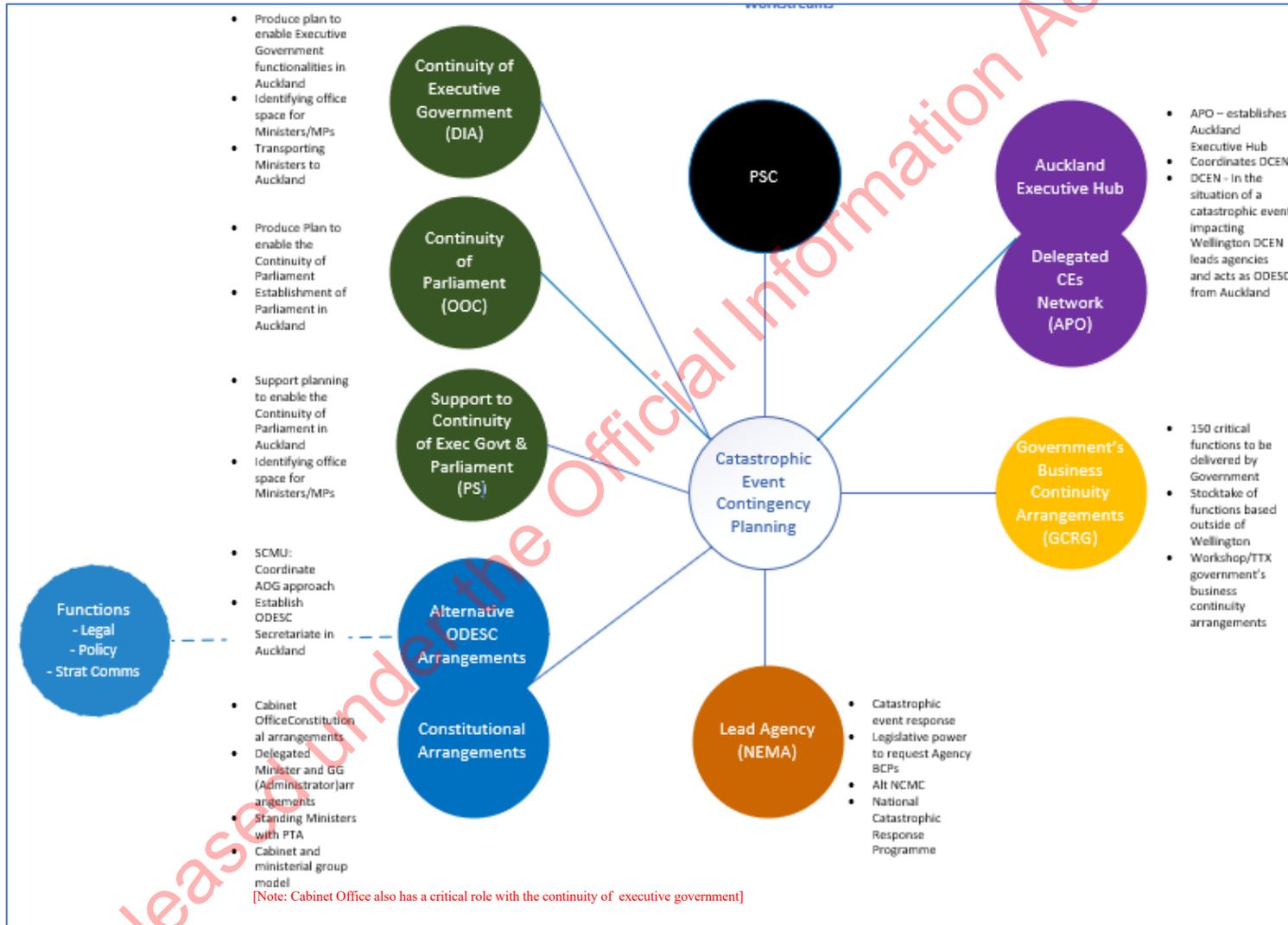
Sean Bolton  
Executive Director  
Risk and System Governance Group  
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

12 February 2025

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<sup>1</sup> The Steering Committee is based upon the membership of the 'Continuity and Delivery of Executive Government and Parliament' forum convened by the Chief Executive of DPMC and consisting of senior officials from the following agencies: APO, Cabinet Office DPMC, DIA, NEMA, Office of the Clerk and Parliamentary Service. The membership will be reviewed once the steering committee is convened.

Workstreams (Draft)





# ODESC

Officials' Committee for Domestic  
and External Security Coordination

## New Zealand Catastrophic Readiness Workstream Leads Meeting

### Record of Meeting

18 February 2025

DPMC Kate Sheppard Place, Rm 1.03

#### Attendees

Agency	Attendees
DPMC	Marika Hughes (Chair) s6(a) s6(a) s6(a) (Cabinet Office)
DIA	Karli Rickard
MBIE	Michael Quinn Matt Shaw
NEMA	Dwain Hindriksen
Office of the Clerk	Steve Streefkerk

#### Introduction

1. The Chair welcomed attendees. The purpose of this meeting was to ensure effective coordination at the strategic level across the array of catastrophic event readiness workstreams.

#### Discussion

2. There is an opportunity to seek Chief Executive support for progressing the New Zealand Catastrophic Readiness workstreams and raise awareness of the inter-connected workstreams, at the Public Service Leadership Team (PSLT) advance on 6 March. This will provide a pathway toward seeking support from Ministers.
3. DPMC and DIA will produce an A3 as collateral for the PSLT Advance meetings. This will cover the workstreams under the umbrella of New Zealand's Catastrophic Readiness, articulating the progress that has been made, challenges with progressing this work, risks and issues with not continuing, and seeking support from PSLT to make this a priority.

4. Additionally, a Continuity of Government and Parliament Catastrophic Event Readiness Steering Committee has been established, to ensure there is effective coordination at the strategic level across the array of catastrophic event readiness workstreams. The committee will ensure that activities are joined up; that appropriate mandates are in place; and that gaps, risks, and opportunities can be considered collectively and escalated to the National Hazards Board (NHB) for governance and oversight.
5. Workstream leads are expected to be capturing risks for their workstreams and were asked to share these with DPMC's Strategic Crisis Management Unit, who will capture the high-level risks for the Steering Committee.
6. NEMA had requested a Catastrophic Readiness item for May's NHB. However, with the creation of this group, and the Steering Committee, this item will be postponed and potentially re-framed. This will ensure that the risks are captured first in this group and escalated appropriately to the Steering Committee, and then NHB (if needed).

## Workstreams Roundtable

7. Workstream leads provided an update on their workstream with common challenges being capacity and prioritisation as well as the need for a mandate or support.
8. *Alternate National Crisis Management Centre (NEMA-led)*: Contract process is underway to secure the new location which although new, is still not completely fit for purpose; funding will be sought from Ministers at some point. Building a workforce to staff the alternate NCMC during a catastrophic event response is ongoing.
9. *Catastrophic Readiness (NEMA-led)*: The Catastrophic Event Handbook is now complete and available publicly. NEMA is producing specific response plans for the various natural hazards that sit under the umbrella term of catastrophic event and that NEMA is responsible for. This includes Space Weather, with a response plan now complete, and Auckland Volcanic eruption for which a plan is in development.
10. *Delegated Chief Executives Network (MBIE-led)*: Year two of this network has commenced and consideration is now being given on how to create a sustainable model for this network. This includes establishing a Governance Group made up of delegated Chief Executives themselves. Currently this is a voluntary programme and is made up of both delegated Chief Executives as well as those who may support those in such a role. A mandate from both the Public Services Leadership Team and the Public Service Commission as well as specific support, such as guidance on how to lead your

organisation (and the public service), would be beneficial. Plans to develop a collateral hub which contains contact lists, as well as best practice material, is also being explored.

11. *Continuity and Delivery of Executive Government (DIA and Auckland Policy Office-led):*

A plan for the first 72 hours has been developed and agreed to. Work is now underway to make sure this plan can be enacted. This includes but is not limited to identifying and training a cohort of staff to enable the plan, and determining logistical arrangements including resources and other equipment required. Sustainment of the plan beyond 72 hours also needs to be developed. s9(2)(f)(iv)

[Redacted]

12. *Continuity of Government Reference Group (MBIE-led):* This is a small group of individuals effectively volunteering their time to keep it going. Government agencies consider their business continuity plans (BCPs) are in a better state than they actually are. Elements such as whether third-party suppliers are also ready to support and/or have adequate BCPs have not been considered. There is some opportunity to provide backing for this work through the Protective Security Requirements revision as well as the Emergency Management Bill.

13. *Alternate ODESC Arrangements (DPMC-led):* A minimum viable plan was developed in late 2023. Plans to progress this work have all been put on hold due to capacity challenges and prioritisation. Progression includes succession planning, training, development of collateral, exploring memorandums of understanding, as well as identifying, training and testing at the Watch Group level.

14. *Continuity of Parliament Plan (Office of the Clerk):* The current plan, developed in 2014, needs a refresh however capacity to do so is a challenge. The refreshed plan needs to consider various options for working, such as hybrid arrangements, which could be utilised for multiple scenarios, rather than a full relocation of Parliament. Consideration needs to be given to what is legally required in these situations, and Auckland-based stakeholder engagement is also needed. To progress this work, the Plan will be added to Parliament business planning and therefore would need to be regularly reported on.

## Decisions & Actions

Action item	Detail	Lead	Status
1	SCMU (DPMC) and DIA to develop an A3 to inform the PSLT Advance discussion. To include in the A3: overview of the workstreams, progress to date, challenges and risks, enduring questions, recommendations, and next steps.	DPMC, DIA	Complete
2	All to generate a risk register for their workstream and share with SCMU (DPMC) who will capture the high-level risks for escalation to the Steering Committee.	All	Ongoing
3	All to inform SCMU (DPMC) of any planned briefings, budget bids, papers or similar regarding this work which are scheduled to be taken to a governance board and/or Ministers. This will assist with developing a holistic view.	All	Ongoing
4	NEMA to enquire internally as to what is driving the catastrophic readiness item scheduled for May's NHB meeting, and whether this could be pushed to July.	NEMA	Ongoing

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

# Ensuring continuity of government

Strengthening government resilience for a catastrophic event that significantly impacts leadership and functions in Wellington



A catastrophic event will require an all-of-government, whole-of-society response and recovery, over and above business continuity arrangements, to

- continue critical service delivery across the nation
- deliver response activity immediately following an event
- contribute to system response and recovery

**THE ISSUE.** A catastrophic event in Wellington would impact government leadership and the functioning of government services

**OUR SOLUTION.** We're setting foundations for a well organised and effective response and recovery system and strengthening New Zealand's resilience

## IDENTIFY RISKS + CONSEQUENCES

**Wellington holds a critical strategic position as the home of government and government decision making.**

A catastrophic event in Wellington would:

- overwhelm technical and non-technical social systems and resources
- be beyond current arrangements, experience and imagination and exceed emergency management systems
- degrade or disable governance structures and strategic and operational decision-making functions.

## WHAT WE'RE DOING UNDERWAY + COMPLETED

### Strengthening government continuity arrangements

- Developing the *Continuity and delivery of executive government response plan* and *Continuity and delivery of parliament response plan*. (DIA, Parliamentary Service)
- ☑ Updated guidance through the all-of-government *Catastrophic event handbook*. (NEMA)
- ☑ Established a Catastrophic Event Readiness Steering Committee to ensure effective coordination across catastrophic planning and these projects. (DPMC)
- ☑ Tested catastrophic event planning, including current arrangements through exercise Rū Whenua. (NEMA)
- Strengthening government business continuity arrangements. (Government Continuity Reference Group)

### Setting up alternative arrangements outside Wellington

- Establishing alternative leadership in Auckland through the Delegated Chief Executives Network and a voluntary programme of support. (APO)
- Establishing alternate ODESC arrangements. (DPMC)
- Ensuring robust response leadership can be established at an Auckland National Crisis Management Centre (NCCM). (NEMA)
- Securing alternative accommodation, staffing, ICT, and security arrangements in Auckland to support the executive, parliament and NCCM. (DIA, Parliamentary Service, NEMA)

### Working with the Prime Minister and Cabinet

- Making sure they know their roles and responsibilities if a catastrophic event takes place.
- Confirming support for ongoing activities and potential investment.

## WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO WITH YOUR COMMITMENT

**Develop a sustainable model for response.**

**Strengthen the Delegated Chief Executives Network mandate.**

**Increase capabilities outside Wellington to lead the public service.**

**Identify capable resourcing.**

**Establish formal accountability and governance across the public service.**

**Prioritise all-of-government response support.**

**Prepare for longer term arrangements.**

**Deliver solutions in a fiscally restrained environment.**

**FOR PSLT TO CONSIDER TODAY**

## AGREE

- To identify resources in Auckland (or outside Wellington) to support Ministers, alternate ODESC arrangements and the National Crisis Management Centre (NCCM).

## NOTE

- The work has progressed as far as it can. We now need further commitment from leaders to ensure successful implementation.
- We will be socialising work with the Prime Minister and Cabinet to:
  - ensure that they know their roles and responsibilities when a catastrophic event takes place
  - confirm support for ongoing activities and potential investment.
- The establishment of the Catastrophic Event Readiness Steering Committee (DIA, DPMC, MBIE, NEMA, Parliamentary Service, PSC). The committee will explore options for establishing formal governance arrangements, and reporting to chief executives through National Hazards Board.
- Business continuity plan work needs to be prioritised and resourced.

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# Briefing Note

To: Prime Minister  
 From: Sean Bolton, Risk and Systems Governance Group, DPMC  
 Date: 16 April 2025  
 Subject: **Catastrophic Readiness Workstreams**

1. We are scheduled to meet with you on 7 May regarding New Zealand's catastrophic event readiness, specifically the Continuity and Delivery of Executive Government Plan and next steps required to embed and implement this Plan. As we embed the National Risk and Resilience Framework, a key function is ensuring there are operational plans in place for our most significant risks.
2. A catastrophic event in Wellington would significantly impact government leadership and the functioning of government services. Such an event would overwhelm technical and non-technical social systems and resources; exceed emergency management systems; as well as degrade or disable governance structures and strategic and operational decision-making functions.
3. We have plans in place which require Ministerial involvement to progress. The attached A3 shows the primary workstreams underway to strengthen government resilience for a catastrophic event that significantly impacts Wellington. A Catastrophic Event Readiness Steering Committee has also been established to ensure there is effective coordination at the strategic level across these workstreams. I chair this committee, and the National Hazards Board (NHB) provides governance and oversight.
4. Chief Executives across the public sector have recently agreed to support these workstreams. This includes identifying resources in Auckland (or outside Wellington) to support Ministers, alternate ODESC system arrangements, and the National Crisis Management Centre (NCMC). Agencies are working through their own business continuity plans and resourcing needed to respond to a catastrophic event.
5. The attached A3 outlines the work underway, and the areas where further effort is required. To enable this work to continue and to ensure successful implementation, Ministers and their offices need to be engaged to understand their roles and responsibilities, and to support agencies in prioritising and addressing the identified challenges. This is particularly important for strengthening and embedding both the Continuity and Delivery of Executive Government Plan, and the revision of the Continuity of Parliament Plan (which also requires engagement and support from Members of Parliament). With your agreement, we have attached a letter we propose you sign and send to Ministers asking them to prioritise and engage in this work.
6. At our meeting on 7 May, we will discuss with you next steps for these workstreams including a potential paper to bring to Cabinet to ensure Ministers understand their roles and responsibilities in the Continuity and Delivery of Executive Government Plan, s9(2)(f)(iv)

## Recommendations

We recommend you:

- |                                                                                                                                                                                       |                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>agree</b> to sign and send the attached letter to Ministers to outline your expectations and ensure Ministerial preparedness.</li> </ol> | <b>YES / NO</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|



# ODESC

Officials' Committee for Domestic  
and External Security Coordination

## Catastrophic Event Readiness Steering Committee Minutes

Cabinet Committee Room 8.5 (and MS Teams)

Monday 12 May 2025, 1415 – 1500hrs

### Attendees

Agency	
<b>Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC)</b>	Sean Bolton (Chair) Marika Hughes s6(a) [redacted] (Cabinet Office) s6(a) [redacted] s6(a) [redacted] s6(a) [redacted]
<b>Public Service Commission (PSC)</b>	Erik Koed
<b>Department of Internal Affairs (DIA)</b>	Hoani Lambert Karli Rickard
<b>National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)</b>	Sarah Holland Dwain Hindriksen
<b>Office of the Clerk/Parliamentary Service</b>	Steve Streefkerk
<b>Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)</b>	Matthew Shaw Michael Quinn (Auckland Policy Office)

### Introduction

1. The Chair welcomed attendees to the first Catastrophic Event Readiness Steering Committee meeting reiterating the purpose of the meeting was to ensure effective coordination at the strategic level across the array of catastrophic event readiness workstreams; and identify key risks and barriers to workstream delivery. He also highlighted that while the role of the Committee is intended to be light touch, and not onerous, it provides a useful space to raise issues that need to be addressed.
2. The Chair thanked agencies for sending through their risks/barriers to delivering toward their Catastrophic Event Readiness workstreams, noting DPMC were still waiting for some agencies to send these through.

### Key Updates

3. *Delegated Chief Executives Network:* s9(2)(g)(i) [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]

s9(2)(g)(i) will inform the forward planning for the DCE network workshops with DPMC, NEMA and DIA involvement. Workshops will run every two months until the end of 2025, with the next workshop on 10 June 2025.

4. Michael noted inconsistencies in the formal tasking of the delegated individuals, adding some had received letters and others had not. The Steering Committee agreed that formal letters had inconsistently (or not at all) been issued to alternatives or delegated staff.
5. Erik suggested a follow-up with Michael to better understand what delegations are in place and to highlight roles which may not be able to be delegated, as these may need to be exercised by the Public Service Commission.
6. *Continuity and Delivery of Executive Government*: Hoani and Michael noted that whilst the workstream has so far received positive buy-in from chief executives the key risks arising include staffing the implementation of the plan and s9(2)(f)(iv).  
Hoani and Sean were scheduled to meet with the Prime Minister the following day to discuss the Plan s9(2)(f)(iv) and would ensure that any outcomes of that meeting were brought back into workstreams where relevant.

s9(2)(f)(iv)

7. *Alternate ODESC Arrangements*: Progress on this work has been limited due to a lack capacity in the Strategic Crisis Management Unit (SCMU), however recent staffing additions will allow for some advancement. DPMC have been supporting the Continuity and Delivery of Executive Government workstream and have contributed to the Delegated Chief Executives Network workstream on a regular basis.
8. *Alternate National Crisis Management Centre*: The Alternate National Crisis Management Centre (aNCMC) has now moved from Ellerslie Racecourse to Auckland University's south Auckland campus in Manukau and will be active on 2 July 2025. Discussions are ongoing within NEMA regarding other uses for this space, outside utilisation during a crisis.
9. *NEMA's Catastrophic Readiness*: With the recent completion of the Catastrophic Event Handbook, Sarah and Dwain highlighted the next phase of this work will require input and coordination from many different agencies. Progression in some key workstream areas have been paused due to staffing limitations, with NEMA undertaking to update the Steering Committee on which specific areas will be affected.

10. *Continuity of Parliament Plan:* There has been limited traction on this workstream due to capacity issues, with Parliamentary Services escalating within the business to seek further support. Other agencies (DIA, NEMA, DPMC) offered resourcing and support should Parliamentary Services require.

## Key Issues, Risks, and Barriers

Key themes arising included:

### 11. *Resourcing:*

- Numbers: Agencies agreed that more work needs to be done to scope out what is needed to appropriately recruit alternate staff in Auckland to implement the alternate arrangements. Noting potential dependencies within the group (e.g. duplication of resources in a limited pool of public servants) it was agreed that this area be highlighted as a key action from this meeting.
- Capabilities: Michael noted the variation in seniority of the Auckland based delegates ranging between Tier 2 and Tier 5, and that more work needs to be done to address capability gaps at the various levels (with some delegated roles requiring a higher level of specific knowledge). Additionally, agencies agreed that capabilities related to leadership were more limited in the Auckland pool of delegates.
- Michael noted whilst they had identified people as alternates in many cases, the training individuals have received to undertake the role is either non-existent or very limited. s9(2)(g)(i)  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]
- Similarly, high staff movements are proving challenging for keeping the right people educated and skilled to undertake delegated roles. Michael suggested running more frequent workshops to ensure correct delegates are identified and to maintain relevance.
- It was agreed that centralised training, including leadership training, and testing of an alternate system would be beneficial to identifying key dependencies, gaps and risks.
- Agencies agreed further work was also required to scope equipment (e.g. IT and physical space requirements), the volume and scope of which would be dependent on the factors noted above.

12. *Legislation*: The Steering Committee suggested seeking input from other agencies (i.e. Parliamentary Council Office, Crown Law) noting a commissioning of potentially bespoke legislative work may be required to enable stand-by/alternate arrangements. It was also suggested that Parliamentary Council Office join the Steering Committee, although it was noted that this runs the risk of scope creep. DPMC will consider membership in advance of the next Steering Committee meeting.
13. *Lack of centralised Business Continuity Management*: Business Continuity Management (BCM) is not centralised, therefore dependencies between agencies are not being captured in agencies' Business Continuity Plans. The Steering Committee agreed that BCM needed a central 'home' to ensure agencies critical functions are accurately captured, and to coordinate and escalate system level risks and dependencies.

### Next Steps

14. The Steering Committee agreed to prioritise three to four areas of work to focus on, to better steer work ahead. It was suggested that resourcing (i.e. numbers, capabilities, dependencies) would be a good place to start; DPMC will scope a project with agencies to progress this.
15. The Chair undertook to ensure any outcomes from the meeting with the Prime Minister on 13<sup>th</sup> May were fed back to agencies as needed.

## Action Items

Action Item	Detail	Responsibility	Status
1	Discuss further support the PSC can offer to the Delegated Chief Executive Network.	PSC, MBIE	Open
2	Consider whether PCO should join the Steering Committee.	DPMC (Chair)	Open
3	DPMC and PSC to meet and discuss best way to take Business Continuity Management discussion forward.	DPMC, Public Service Commission	Closed
4	Work with agencies to scope and develop a work programme to address resourcing and next steps.	DPMC (SCMU)	Open

Released under the Official Information Act 1982



Item 6

RT HON CHRISTOPHER LUXON  
PRIME MINISTER

Government Ministers  
Parliament Buildings  
WELLINGTON

Dear Ministers,

**Strengthening government readiness for a catastrophic event impacting Wellington**

I am writing to inform you of work underway to strengthen our readiness to respond to a catastrophic event impacting Wellington and to ensure that the Government can continue to function.

Wellington holds a critical strategic position as the home of New Zealand's House of Parliament, Executive, and core Government agencies. A catastrophic event in Wellington would significantly impact our strategic and operational decision-making functions and degrade, or disable, key governance structures.

The attached A3 outlines key workstreams that are focused on building system resilience outside of Wellington.

While good progress has been made, this work also requires Ministerial involvement. As Ministers, we have a responsibility to ensure that ourselves and our offices are prepared to respond for events of this nature, and that alternate arrangements are in place outside of Wellington. A plan has been developed to ensure that Executive Government can continue, and we need to ensure that we understand our roles and responsibilities in relation to this plan. Additionally, we will also need to work collectively as a Parliament across parties to ensure that the Continuity of Parliament Plan is revised.

My expectation is that you engage with this work. I also expect your support for your agencies to prioritise this work and address identified challenges over the next 12 months.

I expect to bring a paper to Cabinet in due course, to share the Continuity and Delivery of Executive Government Response Plan and take any necessary decisions, s9(2)(f)(iv)

Yours sincerely

Rt Hon Christopher Luxon  
**Prime Minister**

19 September 2025

Tēnā koutou Chief Executives

### ***Catastrophic Event Readiness: Update and Next Steps***

In March, I sought your support for the workstreams DPMC, DIA, MBIE, NEMA, and Parliamentary Service have underway to ensure the continuity of government following a catastrophic event that significantly impacts leadership and functions in Wellington.

Since I spoke to you in March:

- We have briefed the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the House on catastrophic event readiness, specifically the Continuity and Delivery of Executive Government Plan (CDEG) and the next steps required to embed and implement this plan. The Prime Minister has requested to exercise this plan in the next 12 months;
- The Prime Minister wrote to Ministers outlining his expectations for them to support agencies to prioritise this work and address the identified challenges, as well as to ensure Ministerial preparedness;
- The provisions relating to business continuity management have been shifted from the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002 to the Public Service Act 2020 through the Public Service Amendment Bill; and
- The Delegated Chief Executives Network conducted a tabletop exercise to familiarise and prepare them for the actions and activities they would undertake in the first 72 hours post a catastrophic event.

Following your agreement in March to identify resources in Auckland (or outside Wellington) to support Ministers and alternate ODESC arrangements, workstream leads have now determined the resourcing requirements for what is needed to appropriately implement and sustain alternate arrangements in Auckland. These arrangements are for portfolio private secretaries, alternate ODESC secretariat, alternate Cabinet secretariat, support to Ministers, and an Incident Management Team to support Executive Government.

I need your support to develop a pool of capable resources before the end of 2025, who can fulfil these functions when required. Requests for expressions of interest will soon go out to your agencies seeking for public service employees based outside Wellington to fulfil the functions of the alternate ODESC secretariat, alternate Cabinet secretariat and the CDEG Incident Management Team. We will look to formalise arrangements following the EOI process, but we are looking for your commitment to release these staff into these secretariat roles if needed. We would be grateful if you could encourage your staff to apply for these roles, and support those who are successful by releasing them to attend training events.

In addition, we need to build a cohort of alternate private secretaries for Ministers who know the critical functions of your portfolio/s and organisations well and could be released from your own response to become your agency's private secretary in Auckland following a catastrophic event.

Not every agency will require a private secretary for the response. DIA, as the agency responsible for supporting all staff in Ministers offices, will reach out to identified agencies following this letter to seek your support and discuss specific requirements.

Thank you for your continued support to strengthen our readiness to respond to a catastrophic event impacting Wellington, and to ensure that the Government can continue to function during and following such an event.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Bolton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sean Bolton  
Acting Deputy Chief Executive  
National Security and Resilience Group

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