



CABINET OFFICE

20 February 2026



Ref: OIA-2025/26-0460

Tēnā koe [redacted]

**Official Information Act request: [redacted] Ministerial conflicts of interest**

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 23 January 2026. You requested:

*I request copies of all assessments, correspondence, and records held by the Cabinet Office relating to [numbered for ease of reference]:*

- [1] Any advice provided to Hon Nicole McKee regarding conflicts of interest or perceived conflicts concerning the appointment of members to the Ministerial Arms Advisory Group (MAAG)*
- [2] Any Cabinet Office advice previously given to Minister McKee regarding conflicts of interest in relation to her ministerial responsibility related to firearms*
- [3] Any advice, guidance, or communication between the Cabinet Office, DPMC, or the Prime Minister's Office regarding whether Minister McKee should have sought advice or recused herself from decisions involving her ministerial responsibilities as they relate to firearms and the appointment of members to the Ministerial Arms Advisory Group (MAAG)*
- [4] Any advice relating to compliance with the Cabinet Manual as it pertains to Ministers advocating for, or making decisions on, appointments where there is a personal relationship between the Minister and a nominee.*

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

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DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

Te Tari o te Pirimia me te Komiti Matua

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### **Part 3 of your request**

The Cabinet Office holds no advice, guidance or communications relevant to part 3 of your request. I have therefore decided to refuse this part of your request, under section 18(g) of the Act on the basis that this information does not exist.

### **Part 1, 2 and 4 of your request**

The Cabinet Office holds information (i.e., email correspondence and documents) that falls within the scope of parts 1, 2 and 4 of your request. I have decided to withhold this information in full, under the following grounds:

1. section 9(2)(a), to protect the privacy of individuals;
2. section 9(2)(ba)(i), to protect the supply of similar information in the future;
3. section 9(2)(f)(iv), to maintain the confidentiality of advice tendered by or to Ministers and officials; and
4. section 9(2)(g)(i), to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinion.

The Cabinet Office, on behalf of the Prime Minister, supports Ministers in identifying and managing conflicts of interest that may arise in relation to their portfolios or other ministerial responsibilities. This includes providing advice to Ministers (such as Hon McKee) on the management of potential or actual conflicts of interest in the context of decisions on appointments.

In making this decision, 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, and I have concluded that it does not. Successive Ombudsmen have long held the view that Cabinet Office advice to Ministers is inherently confidential, and 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 resolve them.

### **Publicly available information**

The Cabinet Office publishes some information about the management of ministerial conflicts of interest, which might be of interest to you. This information covers the transfers of responsibility and standing 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 | DPMC](#). Some of these transfers of responsibility have arisen due to a potential conflict of interest where there is a personal relationship between a candidate for appointment and the appointing Minister.

As has been reported publicly, Hon Goldsmith recently made decisions about appointments to the MAAG to avoid any potential perception that Hon McKee had a conflict of interest. No transfer was required because Hon Goldsmith is the portfolio Minister and had delegated these decisions to Hon McKee.

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**