



15 July 2026

Ref: OIA-2025/26-0772

Tēnā koe [REDACTED],

Official Information Act request relating to Budget 2026 savings and workforce changes

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 28 May 2026. You requested:

"[...] the following information held by your agency / entity relating to the Budget 2026 public sector savings exercise:

- 1. The agency's Budget 2026 savings options paper(s) or initiative bids submitted to the Treasury or the Minister between 1 September 2025 and 19 May 2026.*
- 2. Any document showing any FTE reduction expected at the agency as a result of Budget 2026, broken down by business group, function, or location to the extent that breakdown exists.*
- 3. Any document held by the agency that defines or identifies which of its roles are considered 'frontline' and which are not, for the purpose of the Budget 2026 exercise.*
- 4. Any business case, modelling, or analysis dated between 1 September 2025 and present concerning the use of AI, automation, or digital tools to replace, reduce, or substitute roles within the agency.*
- 5. Any change proposal, indicative structure document, or consultation document issued to staff or unions on or before the date of this request relating to the Budget 2026 savings exercise.*
- 6. Correspondence between the Chief Executive (or equivalent) and the Minister, the Treasury, or the Public Service Commissioner between 1 January 2026 and present concerning the savings exercise or workforce reductions.*

Where a document that falls under scope of this request cannot be released, please supply a summary of that document's contents. Please include 'OIA0222' in any correspondence relating to this request where possible."

With the exception of Part 6, we have understood your request to cover information from 1 September 2025 onwards.

On 26 June 2026, I notified you of my decision on Parts 3 to 5 of your request and extended the timeframe for responding to Parts 1, 2 and 6 under section 15A(1) of the Act, due to the consultations needed before making a decision. Following that extension, I am now in a position to respond to Parts 1, 2 and 6 of your request.

Parts 1 and 2

We have interpreted these parts of your request as seeking formal advice, such as briefings, aides-memoire and reports, sent or received between 1 September 2025 and 19 May 2026:

1. relating to Budget 2026 savings options or initiative bids submitted by DPMC to either the Treasury or the Prime Minister, as Vote Minister for Prime Minister and Cabinet and Minister responsible for DPMC; and
2. showing any expected reductions in FTEs at DPMC as a result of Budget 2026, including, where available, breakdowns by business group, function, or location.

As you may be aware, documents such as the 'Summary of Initiatives' and 'Estimates of Appropriations for Vote Prime Minister and Cabinet' are publicly available on the Budget 2026 website here: <https://budget.govt.nz/budget/2026/by/vote/pmcab.htm>.

The Treasury has advised that, as in past years, it intends to proactively release other key advice and correspondence that informed Budget 2026 decisions. This will include any invitation and package finalisation letters from the Minister of Finance to the Prime Minister, and any material prepared by DPMC and provided to the Treasury for inclusion in Treasury advice to the Minister of Finance on Budget initiatives. Accordingly, I am refusing Part 1 of your request under section 18(d) of the Act, as the information is, or will soon be, publicly available. Information yet to be published is scheduled for release by the Treasury on its website on or before 20 August 2026: <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications>.

One document has been identified as in scope of Part 2 of your request. This is a letter to the Prime Minister, Rt Hon Christopher Luxon, dated 19 May 2026, from the Minister of Finance, Hon Nicola Willis, and the Minister for the Public Service and Digitising Government, Hon Paul Goldsmith. This letter will also be proactively released by the Treasury and/or the Public Service Commission, so I am refusing this part of your request under section 18(d) of the Act as the information will soon be publicly available.

Part 6

We have interpreted this part of your request as seeking any emails or letters between DPMC's Chief Executive, Ben King, the Prime Minister, the Treasury, and/or the Public Service Commissioner, Sir Brian Roche, for the period 1 January to 28 May 2026 concerning the savings exercise or workforce reductions.

The emails identified as in scope are listed in the table below. I have decided to release the relevant parts of these emails to you, subject to information being withheld as noted. The relevant grounds under which information has been withheld are:

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

Where information is not in scope of your request it is marked accordingly.

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	8 April 2026	Emails between the Public Service Commissioner, Sir Brian Roche, and DPMC Chief Executive, Ben King	Release relevant parts, some information withheld under s9(2)(g)(i).

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
2	6 March 2026	Emails between Sir Brian Roche, Ben King, and Secretary of the Treasury, Iain Rennie	Release relevant parts, some information withheld under s9(2)(a), s9(2)(f)(iv) and s9(2)(g)(i).
3	4 March 2026	Email from Ben King to Iain Rennie <i>Attachment: Draft Cabinet Paper</i>	Release email, some information withheld under s9(2)(g)(i). Attachment withheld under s9(2)(g)(i).
4	10 February 2026	Email from Ben King to Sir Brian Roche and Iain Rennie <i>Attachment: Note for File - Public Sector Transformation: Central agency CE's meeting with Minister of Finance and Minister for the Public Service</i>	Release email. Release attachment, some information withheld under s9(2)(f)(iv) and s9(2)(g)(i).

The final version of the draft Cabinet paper (Item 3 – Attachment), which is withheld under section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act, will be proactively released by the Treasury on its website, as noted in my response to Parts 1 and 2 above: <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications>.

You also requested summaries of documents where they cannot be released. In relation to Parts 1 and 2, the information is being refused under section 18(d) of the Act because it is, or will shortly be, publicly available. In relation to Part 6, the information is being partially released to you. In these circumstances, DPMC will not provide a separate summary.

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 DPMC website during our regular publication cycle. Typically, information is released monthly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information, including your name and contact details, will be removed before publication.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alan Cassidy', with a stylized, cursive script.

Alan Cassidy
Deputy Chief Executive, Corporate and Chief People Officer

From: Brian Roche <Brian.Roche@publicservice.govt.nz>
Sent: Wednesday, 8 April 2026 8:37 pm
To: Ben King [DPMC] <Ben.King@dpmc.govt.nz>
Subject: Re: OSC

s9(2)(g)(i)

As part of that we undertook to pull together some material on growth, by agency, since 2017 and what the drivers of the growth have been.

Might pay to liaise at some point

s9(2)(g)(i)

Cheers

Brian

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From: Ben King [DPMC] <Ben.King@dpmc.govt.nz>
Sent: Wednesday, April 8, 2026 8:31 PM
To: Brian Roche <Brian.Roche@publicservice.govt.nz>
Subject: RE: OSC

This email was sent from someone outside of Te Kawa Mataaho. Please take extra care.

Thanks on OCE.

s9(2)(g)(i)

s9(2)(g)(i)

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

From: Brian Roche <Brian.Roche@publicservice.govt.nz>

Sent: Wednesday, 8 April 2026 8:28 pm

To: Ben King [DPMC] <Ben.King@dpmc.govt.nz>

Subject: Re: OSC

Thanks Ben

No problem at my end.

At some point it would be worth touching base around the Transformation paper and the FTE target.

Cheers

Brian

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[Not in Scope]

[Redacted]

[Not in Scope]

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

From: [Ben King \[DPMC\]](#)
To: [Brian Roche <brian.roche@publicservice.govt.nz>](#); [Iain Rennie \[TSY\]](#)
Cc: [^PS: Gabrielle Wilson](#); [Stacey Wymer \[TSY\]](#); [David Harrison \[TSY\]](#); [Josh Masson](#); [s9\(2\)\(a\): PM's Office](#); [parliament.govt.nz](#); [Lisa Daniell \[DPMC\]](#); [Heather Kirkham \[DPMC\]](#); [s9\(2\)\(a\)](#); [s9\(2\)\(a\)](#); [^Parliament: s9\(2\)\(a\)](#); [^Parliament: s9\(2\)\(a\)](#); [^Parliament: s9\(2\)\(a\)](#); [Janine Smith \[DPMC\]](#)
Subject: Cabinet Paper: Further feedback from MoF
Date: Friday, 6 March 2026 2:07:00 pm

Good afternoon Sir Brian and Iain

MOF has provided some further feedback on the public service cabinet paper to us
s9(2)(f)(iv), s9(2)(g)(i)

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

s9(2)(f)(iv), s9(2)(g)(i)



[Not in Scope]



[Not in Scope]

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

From: [Ben King \[DPMC\]](#)
To: [Iain Rennie \[TSY\]](#)
Cc: [Heather Kirkham \[DPMC\]](#)
Subject: Revised Paper
Date: Wednesday, 4 March 2026 7:28:00 pm
Attachments: [2603 draft Cab paper PS transformation 3 March.docx](#)

Hi Iain

Thanks for your call earlier today, and your engagement with Heather Kirkham.

Heather has pulled a new paragraph 44 together (tracked into this version), which for ease of reference reads:

A number of tools will be used to achieve the target including the Government Workforce Policy Statement, setting, monitoring and reporting of the targets at an agency level and setting Chief Executive expectations. In addition, the workforce section of performance plans can be expanded, along with explicit Ministerial decisions to stop or reduce agency functions, and the machinery of government changes outlined above.

Heather K will share this with your team, separately. It would be good to know s9(2)(g)(i)
[REDACTED] your perspective on the proposed approach given the experience you bring from your former life as the SSC ...

Best regards
Ben



Released under the Official Information Act 1982

From: Ben King [DPMC]

Sent: Tuesday, 10 February 2026 6:04 pm

To: Iain Rennie [TSY] <Iain.Rennie@treasury.govt.nz>; brian.roche@publicservice.govt.nz

Cc: Janine Smith [DPMC] <Janine.Smith@dpmc.govt.nz>; Heather Kirkham [DPMC] <Heather.Kirkham@dpmc.govt.nz>; Mark Sowden [TSY] <Mark.Sowden@treasury.govt.nz>; 'Hugo Vitalis' <hugo.vitalis@publicservice.govt.nz>; Chris Bunny [TSY] <Chris.Bunny@treasury.govt.nz>; Stacey Wymer [TSY] <Stacey.Wymer@treasury.govt.nz>; ^PS: Gabrielle Wilson <Gabrielle.Wilson@publicservice.govt.nz>; Kathrine Wigley [DPMC] <kathrine.wigley@dpmc.govt.nz>

Subject: Public Sector Transformation, Central Agency CEs meeting with MoF and MPS, 10 February.docx

Dear Sir Brian and Iain

I've attached a draft note from our meeting today with MoF and MPS.

I'm pretty sure I captured most of the detail, but please let me know if I've missed (or mischaracterised) any important detail – or if I've miscued any nuance.

Otherwise, I suggest our teams use this as the commissioning document for the next draft of the Cabinet paper (which I understand our teams are aiming to have with us by tomorrow night (11 Feb). I'll also ask my office to see if the three of us can get together, even if it's on zoom, late on Thursday or early Friday so we can go through and confirm our collective agreement with the final draft.

Thanks in advance to all the teams across DPMC, PSC and Treasury for your quick work on the next iteration of the draft.

Best regards

Ben

10 February 2026

Note for File

Public Sector Transformation: Central agency CE's meeting with Minister of Finance and Minister for the Public Service

The Public Service Commissioner (Sir Brian Roche), the Secretary of Treasury (Iain Rennie) and I met with the Minister of Finance (MoF - Hon Nicola Willis) and the Minister for the Public Service (MPS - Hon Judith Collins KC) in MoF's office on Tuesday, 10 February. Paula Oliver (Ministerial Advisor to MoF), Julie Johnston (Ministerial Advisor, MPS) and Joe Ascroft (PMO) also attended.

2 The purpose of the meeting was to receive Ministerial direction on the draft Cabinet paper titled "Public Sector Transformation", iterative drafts of which have been circulated to Ministers in December 2025, and in January 2026.

3 Minister Willis opened the meeting by saying that she, the Prime Minister and MPS were aligned around the need for a cap on public service FTEs. s9(2)(g)(i)

s9(2)(g)(i)

5 Minister Willis went on to explain that officials were to develop a system which had the following attributes:

- s9(2)(g)(i)
- Within the overall cap, central agencies are asked to develop a mechanism to clearly track "front line" and "back office" roles. s9(2)(g)(i)

6 MoF underlined again her understanding of the challenges of defining “front line” and “back office”, including potential boundary issues. s9(2)(g)(i)

[REDACTED]

7 Returning to definitions of front line and back office, MoF pointed out s9(2)(g)(i)

[REDACTED]

8 Ministers are therefore expecting two products:

(a) A **revised draft Cabinet paper**, which would be finalised and in MoF and MPS’s Ministerial bags by deadlines on Friday 13 February, and would have the following elements:

- s9(2)(g)(i)
- An undertaking to provide advice by mid-March on how to define “front line” and “back office” roles;
- s9(2)(f)(iv), s9(2)(g)(i)
- Continue to emphasise the importance of public service transformation and digitisation as vehicles to deliver greater efficiencies (and therefore reduce costs and FTEs);
- Foreshadow that public service departments will be asked to make 2% savings in B26, and then a further 5% saving in B27 and B28; and
- Note that all the measures above are self-reinforcing – that is, that public service transformation and digitisation will reduce costs and FTEs, which will help us achieve the cap and the savings targets – s9(2)(g)(i)

(b) Follow up advice (as per the second bullet point above), delivered by mid-March, which would inform Ministers on how central agencies would work together to manage the FTE cap, including through a range of possible tools, which might

include (i.e. this is a non-prescriptive and non-exhaustive list – the advice should flesh-out and refine an approach for Ministerial consideration):

- Clear definitions of “front line” and “back office” roles;
- How the Public Service Act reforms will contribute by streamlining and focussing the public service on its core business;
- CE accountability for numbers in their own agency, and across sectors;
- The fiscal lever (including how the 2%, 5%, 5% savings targets will help reduce FTEs);

s9(2)(f)(iv), s9(2)(g)(i)

- How public service aggregation and digitisation can/will contribute.

9 Turning to other issues, both MoF and MPS noted their interest in ensuring that the
s9(2)(f)(iv), s9(2)(g)(i)

10 s9(2)(g)(i)

11 Finally, MoF and MPS agreed with Rennie’s recommendation that, once the Cabinet paper has been agreed, it would be important for both Ministers to come and talk to public service chief executives about the detail of the paper; to underline their commitment to building a strong, capable public service which delivers services which meet the needs and expectations of New Zealanders; and to explain how the FTE cap, the broader transformation programme and digitisation would all contribute towards achieving these goals.

Ben King
Secretary, Department of the Prime Minister & Cabinet