



CABINET OFFICE

28 July 2026

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[REDACTED]

Ref: OIA-2025/26-0831

Tēnā koe [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Official Information Act request: RiverLink / Melling advice

Thank you for your Official Information Act (the Act) request received on 17 June 2026. You requested:

1. *Copies of all assessments, correspondence, and records held by the Cabinet Office relating to any advice provided to Hon Chris Bishop regarding conflicts of interest or associated issues concerning the RiverLink project, the CityLink (Melling) interchange, or related transport infrastructure projects.*
2. *Any briefings, notes, talking points, or internal communications referring to the above matters.*
3. *Any conflict-of-interest assessments, declarations, or mitigation plans prepared for or provided to the Minister in relation to RiverLink, CityLink (Melling), or associated transport projects.*
4. *Any Cabinet papers, Cabinet Committee papers, or Cabinet Office minutes that reference RiverLink, CityLink (Melling), or conflict of interest considerations involving the Minister.*
5. *Any communications between the Cabinet Office and:*
 - a. *The Minister's Office*
 - b. *Waka Kotahi*
 - c. *Greater Wellington Regional Council*
 - d. *Hutt City Council**relating to RiverLink, CityLink (Melling), or conflict of interest issues.*
6. *I request that the response and any released documents be provided to me in hard copy by post, and that three (3) printed copies of all released material be supplied. “*

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As you were informed, your request was partially transferred to the Minister of Transport under section 14(b)(ii) of the Act, as I believe parts of it were more closely connected to their functions. While the Cabinet Office holds copies of all Cabinet papers, Cabinet Committee papers and minutes in scope of your request, requests for this information are generally transferred to the relevant portfolio Minister as they are in the best position to assess this material for release under the Act.

The time frame for responding to your request was extended under section 15A of the Act by 9 working days because it necessitated a search through a large quantity of information, and consultations to be undertaken before a decision could be made on the request. Following this extension, I am now in a position to respond.

Parts 1-3 and 5

Your request

You kindly provided us with clarification that Part 5 of your request refers specifically to conflict-of-interest issues relating to RiverLink and the CityLink Melling Interchange, or associated projects within this administration. Consistent with this, I have interpreted your other references to 'CityLink (Melling)' to mean the Melling Interchange project.

Your request for information about 'related' or 'associated transport infrastructure projects' has been taken to mean information about projects related to, or associated with, RiverLink or the Melling Interchange project. I have also inferred that your reference to 'Minister' means Hon Bishop (rather than all Ministers).

Publicly available information and information being released

Melling Interchange project

The Cabinet Office holds material within scope of this request, specifically regarding conflicts of interest advice provided to Hon Bishop relating to the Melling Interchange project.

In response to another request under the Act, the Cabinet Office publicly released a summary of material relating to advice provided to Hon Bishop regarding conflicts of interest concerning the Melling Interchange/RiverLink projects ([here - see OIA-2025/26-0341](#)). A further response to another request in May 2026 points to public comments Hon Bishop has made in the House regarding Cabinet Office advice (see link below). That response is due to be published on the DPMC website as OIA-2025/26-0704. For clarity, the Cabinet Office's advice to Hon Bishop relating to the Melling Interchange has not changed from what is summarised in those responses.

I consider that the advice in these responses summarises most of the material that you have requested including the 'conflict-of-interest assessments and mitigation plans prepared for or provided to the Minister' in relation to the Melling Interchange.

The Cabinet Office has supported the Prime Minister's office and Hon Bishop's office regarding written parliamentary questions (WPQs) about Hon Bishop's conflicts of interest and decisions related to the Melling Interchange. The full responses to these WPQs are available on the Parliament website (e.g. WPQ [12208](#)).

The Parliament website also contains the official transcripts of oral questions to Ministers, including where Hon Bishop has been asked about his interests relating to the Melling Interchange: [Hansard Reports - New Zealand Parliament](#). The Cabinet Office's response to an OIA request for correspondence with Hon Bishop's office about a related WPQ is also available ([here - see OIA-2025/26-0512](#)).

RiverLink related project – CityLink bridge

Hon Bishop has publicly acknowledged that he did not ask the Cabinet Office for conflict-

of-interest advice relating to decisions about the City Link bridge (a RiverLink project).

The Cabinet Office holds correspondence relating to WPQs about RiverLink related projects (particularly the City Link bridge). The full responses to these WPQs are publicly available (e.g. WPQ [8143](#) and [8600](#)).

The Cabinet Office also holds material relating to an information request from the Audit Office to the Cabinet Office and to Hon Bishop relating to the CityLink bridge project. The Audit Office has publicly released its conclusions, [here](#).

I have decided to release information relating to the Audit Office's request for information to you in the form of a summary as permitted by section 16(1)(e) of the Act. Some details have been withheld under the grounds listed below.

Date (2026)	Summary of information
2/03 - 4/03	Communications between the Cabinet Office and Hon Bishop's office passing on the letter from the Audit Office to Hon Bishop's office requesting information about the City Link bridge project. <i>The Audit Office said to both the Cabinet Office and Hon Bishop's office that they were considering aspects of the decision to vary Hutt City Council's Infrastructure Acceleration Fund to help fund the City Link bridge. They were specifically interested in how the Cabinet Office and Minister of Housing identified and managed potential conflicts of interest given the Minister's role as MP for Hutt South and previous advocacy for the project. They asked for information relating to this.</i>
9/03	Correspondence from the Cabinet Office to Hon Bishop's office passing on an email from the Audit Office about its approach to managing any related media queries. <i>The Audit Office noted it is for the Minister's office to decide how to respond to queries, but that they had no concerns with the Minister saying that their request related to the City Link bridge project. They did ask that the specifics of their work remain confidential as it was underway.</i>
19/03	Email to Hon Bishop's office with draft Cabinet Office response to the Audit Office for comment. Attached to the email was Hon Bishop's register and a previous email from the Cabinet Office to Hon Bishop's office alerting his office to consider conflicts of interest for upcoming Cabinet Committee paper that mentioned the Melling Interchange project. <i>Hon Bishop and the Cabinet Office provided separate responses to the Audit Office's request for information.</i>
19/03	Communications between the Cabinet Office and Hon Bishop's office on Hon Bishop's draft response to the Audit Office's request.
23/03-24/03	Communications between the Cabinet Office and Hon Bishop's office with final responses to the Audit Office. <i>The Cabinet Office acted as the conduit between the Audit Office and Hon Bishop's office regarding the Audit Office's information request above. The Audit Office have referred to some of the information (e.g. timelines of decisions and advice) provided in its published response, linked above.</i>
30/04	Cabinet Office met with the Audit Office on 30/04/2026 to discuss the

	information that had been provided to them in our written response to their request. <i>The Cabinet Office prepared internal notes that included:</i> • <i>the conflicts of interest advice to Hon Bishop relating to the Melling Interchange (summarised in our OIA response linked above).</i> • <i>Cabinet Office's guidance that we provide to electorate offices on Ministers and constituency matters (see attached).</i> • <i>relevant extracts of the Cabinet Manual (2.62.)</i> • <i>general information about the management of ministerial conflicts (e.g. about ministerial declarations at Cabinet and Cabinet Committee meetings) – available on the DPMC website- here.</i> • <i>examples of other Ministers' approaches to managing constituency interests</i>
15/05	Communications between the Cabinet Office and Hon Bishop's office passing on another letter from the Audit Office to Hon Bishop's office requesting further information. <i>The Auditor-General's final response is publicly available, linked above.</i>
21/05	Communications from the Cabinet Office to Hon Bishop's office confirming an extension for their response to the Audit Office's request for further information had been accepted until the following Monday (25/05).
25/05	Communications between Hon Bishop's office and the Cabinet Office. Hon Bishop's office asked for feedback on their draft response to the Audit Office. <i>Hon Bishop's office sent Hon Bishop's final response to the Cabinet Office to send to the Audit Office.</i>
11/06	Communications between the Cabinet Office and Hon Bishop's office with the Auditor-General's proposed response, for any comments on the findings. <i>The Auditor-General's final response is publicly available, linked above.</i>

Where I have provided a link or reference above, I am refusing your request in part under section 18(d) of the Act, on the basis that this information is or will soon be publicly available.

Information being withheld

The Cabinet Office holds additional material related to your request, including some information held in the material summarised above.

I have decided to withhold this information in full except as is publicly available or as is summarised above, under the following grounds of the Act:

- section 9(2)(ba)(ii), to protect information that is subject to an obligation of confidence, where making the information public would damage the public interest;
- section 9(2)(f)(iv), to maintain confidentiality of advice tendered by, to or between 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 my 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.

Information not held

The Cabinet Office does not hold any communications with Waka Kotahi, Greater Wellington Regional Council or Hutt City Council on conflict-of-interest issues relating to RiverLink or the CityLink (Melling) Interchange, as requested. This part of your request is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the Act on the basis that this information does not exist.

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

Guidance on Ministers and constituency matters for electorate offices



Principles

- Constituents are entitled to contact their local MP to ask for information, advice or assistance or to make representations on matters that are of interest to them in their local area.
- MPs are entitled to make representations to a Minister on an issue of concern in their electorate.
- Where the MP and the relevant Minister are the same person, a risk of a conflict of interest can arise. Ministers need to take care to ensure that their ministerial decisions/responsibilities are not influenced by their constituency interests, and that they are not seen to be using their ministerial position to gain an advantage for their constituents.
- Government agency officials and members of the public don't always distinguish between when a Minister is acting as an MP, and when they are acting as a Minister. Staff in electorate offices may also sometimes be perceived as approaching an agency on behalf of the Minister.

What to do

- If you come across an issue where the Minister does not have ministerial responsibility, he or she can continue to assist and advocate for constituents as normal, including making representations to other Ministers. (However, we generally recommend that Ministers should avoid supporting applications for government funding, even as the local MP).
- Where a constituency issue arises for which the Minister does have ministerial/portfolio responsibility, there are risks for the Minister (as MP) and/or their electorate office in advocating on behalf of that constituent. There may be a perception that any decision the Minister makes as Minister has been influenced by the fact this person is a constituent, or a risk that agency officials will be perceived to have felt pressure to give more favourable treatment to this person because the Minister's electorate office made the approach.
- Electorate offices can still assist constituents in the areas for which their Minister has portfolio responsibility – but they need to exercise their judgement about where to draw the line in terms of the assistance they provide. Generally speaking:
 - There is no problem with the electorate office helping a constituent with enquiries to the agency for which their Minister has responsibility for information - eg to find out what their entitlements are, or where a particular matter is at. If the enquiry is by letter or email, the electorate office could direct the correspondence to the Minister's office, where it can be referred to officials for response.
 - If the constituent is looking for the MP or electorate office to advocate on their behalf – eg they want someone to help them to get the agency to prioritise their

request; argue that they are entitled to more than the agency says they are entitled to; or pursue a complaint about the way in which they have been treated:

- Ministers and their electorate offices need to remember that the agency and its officials are accountable to the Minister, and officials and members of the public may not be able to separate the roles of MP and Minister.
- In such situations, another MP can be asked to represent the constituent. Some electorate offices set up a permanent arrangement with a neighbouring office for an exchange or referral of cases. For example, if one office agreed to take all queries to do with a portfolio area from a neighbouring Minister's electorate office, the Minister's electorate office could pick up work in a separate area from that office (to balance the workloads).

Enquiries and Advice

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