



24 March 2020

Peter Nielson  
fyi-request-12259-d9691fd6@requests.fyi.org.nz

Reference: OIA-2019/20-0409

Dear Mr Nielson

**Official Information Act request relating to Policy Advice Group Advice about the Social Housing Programme 2014 - 2017**

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 11 March 2020. You requested:

*"I write to protest. It is extraordinary and incomprehensible that that you would interpret my request as 'excluding' the Prime Minister who is clearly covered by the term 'ministers' in my request. When one makes a request to DPMC PAG one expects advice to the PM to be included. If there was any doubt why did you not contact me to clarify? I look forward to you responding to my request in a meaningful manner."*

I agree with you, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet should have contacted you to clarify the intent of your request. I apologise for this oversight.

As advised in my earlier letter dated 11 March 2020, the Department's Policy Advisory Group (PAG) provides confidential 'free and frank' policy advice and support to the Prime Minister of the day. These briefings are provided in confidence, in order to support the Prime Minister in his/her role as leader of the Government and chair of Cabinet.

Policy Advisory Group briefings were provided to the Prime Minister on the Social Housing Programme within the period covered by your request. It is my view that it is necessary to withhold this information in its entirety under the following sections of the Act:

- section 9(2)(f)(iv) to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials.
- section 9(2)(g)(i) to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any department or organisation in the course of their duty.

In making my decision, I have taken the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Act into account.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

We do not intend to publish this response on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website.

Yours sincerely



Anneliese Parkin  
**Deputy Chief Executive, Policy**