



NEW ZEALAND
CUSTOMS SERVICE
TE MANA ĀRAI O AOTEAROA

WELLINGTON

The Customhouse, 1 Hinemoa Street, Wellington

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Email: feedback@customs.govt.nz Website: www.customs.govt.nz

PROTECTING NEW ZEALAND'S BORDER

19 January 2023

Ref: OIA 23-422

T Murray

By email: fyi-request-24985-8dfdbb1b@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe T Murray

Request for information under the Official Information Act 1982

Thank you for your email of 1 December 2023, to the New Zealand Customs Service (Customs) requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

"I would like to request the following information:

- *The date, time and location of your initial meeting with the new Minister for your department;*
- *A list of attendees at this meeting*
- *The cost of any flights and accommodation for staff who reside outside of wellington to attend this meeting*
- *Any documentation provided at the meeting*
- *All notes (including handwritten notes) taken at the meeting by department staff;*
- *A copy of any emails sent by department attendees or all staff communications regarding the meeting with the new Minister."*

I have set out Customs' responses below to each part of your request.

Questions One and Two

The date, time and location of your initial meeting with the new Minister for your department;

A list of attendees at this meeting

In response, I can advise that the initial meeting with the new Minister of Customs, Hon Casey Costello took place from 3.30pm to 4.00pm on 28 November 2023 at the Minister's Office, Parliament House. Attendees of the meeting were:

- Hon Casey Costello, Minister of Customs
- Christine Stevenson, Comptroller of Customs
- Richard Bargh, Customs' Deputy Chief Executive Policy Legal and Strategy
- Meredith Ackrill, Private Secretary (Customs), Office of Hon Casey Costello
- Melissa Turner, Senior Private Secretary, Office of Hon Casey Costello

Question Three

The cost of any flights and accommodation for staff who reside outside of wellington to attend this meeting

In response, I can advise that no flight or accommodation expenses were incurred by attendees travelling from outside of Wellington for the initial meeting with the new Minister of Customs, Hon Casey Costello. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(g)(i) of the Act, that the information requested is not held by Customs and there are no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department (for itself and for a departmental agency hosted by it or an interdepartmental executive board serviced by it) or interdepartmental venture or Minister of the Crown or organisation, or by a local authority.

Question Four

Any documentation provided at the meeting

In response, I can advise that no documentation was provided at the initial meeting with the new Minister of Customs, Hon Casey Costello. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, that the requested information does not exist, or despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

Question Five

All notes (including handwritten notes) taken at the meeting by department staff;

In response, I can confirm that one handwritten note was taken by the Comptroller of Customs at the initial meeting with the new Minister of Customs, Hon Casey Costello. This note was a reminder to speak with the Cabinet Secretary, to ask for the inclusion of Tobacco Excise Indexation in the agenda for the Cabinet meeting held on 6 December 2023.

Question Six

A copy of any emails sent by department attendees or all staff communications regarding the meeting with the new Minister.

In response, I can advise that six documents have been identified as being within scope of this part of your request. The document titles, along with Customs' decision on their release, are outlined in the table below and are attached as *Appendix One – Initial meeting with Minister*.

Document Title	Date	Decision on Release
Meeting on tobacco excise indexation (email trail)	28 November 2023	Release in part, some information withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act, to protect the privacy of natural person.
Tobacco Indexation Papers (email trail)	28 November 2023	Release in part, some information withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act, to protect the privacy of natural person.



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Excise and Excise-equivalent Duties Table (Tobacco Products Indexation) Amendment Order 2023 – Letter of approval	23 November 2023	Withhold in full under section 9(2)(h) of the Act, to protect legal professional privilege.
Aide Memoire: Excise and Excise Equivalent Duties Table (Tobacco Products Indexation) Amendment Order 2023 dated 28 November 2023	28 November 2023	Release in full
Excise and Excise-equivalent Duties Table (Tobacco Products Indexation) Amendment Order 2023 Order in Council	29 November 2023	Refused in full under section 18(d) of the Act, that the information requested is publicly available through the following link: order-in-council-excise-and-excise-equivalent-duties-table-tobacco-products-amendment-order-2023.pdf (customs.govt.nz)
Cabinet Paper: Excise and Excise-equivalent Duties Table (Tobacco Products Indexation) Amendment Order 2023	N/A	Refused in full under section 18(d) of the Act, that the information requested will soon be publicly available.

Customs considers that on this occasion, the public interest arguments in favour of making this information available, do not outweigh the necessity to withhold this information.

You have the right, by way of complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Act, to seek an investigation and review of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available online at: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or you can phone 0800 802 602.

If you have any queries in regard to this response, please contact the Correspondence, Reviews and Ministerial Servicing Team: OIA@customs.govt.nz.

Please note that Customs proactively releases responses to Official Information Act requests on our website. As such, we may publish this response on our website after we have sent it to you. Your name and contact details will be removed.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Bamford', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Jamie Bamford
Deputy Chief Executive International and Governance