

16 January 2024

T Murray

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OIA 28946

Tēnā koe T. Murray

I refer to your email of 1 December 2023 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

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

We have interpreted your request to be for information relating to our initial meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) officials had their initial meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs (MFA), in the Ministerial office of the Rt Hon Winston Peters on Monday 27 November 2023 at 2pm.

This meeting was attended by:

- Rt Hon Winston Peters
- Darroch Ball (Chief of Staff to MFA)
- Jon Johansson (Adviser to MFA)
- Chris Seed (Chief Executive and Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade)
- Ben King (Deputy Chief Executive – Policy, MFAT)
- Raylene Liufalani (Chief of Staff, MFAT)

There were no flight or accommodation costs for MFAT staff who attended this meeting, as all are Wellington based.

There were three documents supplied by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for this meeting.

1. The Briefing to Incoming Minister of Foreign Affairs
2. A submission relating to New Zealand's Foreign Policy
3. A submission relating to 2023 Head of Mission/Head of Post Nominations

I am refusing your request for the first two documents listed above under section 18(d) of the OIA, as the information is soon to be publicly available:

- The first document will be published in the Briefings to Incoming Ministers section of the MFAT website: <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/briefings-to-incoming-ministers/>
- The second document will be published in the Official Information Act responses section of the MFAT website: <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/contact-us/official-information-act-responses/>

The third document listed above, relating to 2023 Head of Mission/Head of Post Nominations, is refused in full under the following sections of the OIA:

- 6(a): to avoid prejudicing the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the New Zealand Government; and
- 9(2)(a): to protect individuals' privacy.

Regarding your request for all notes taken by Ministry staff who attended the initial meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs on 27 November 2023, including handwritten notes. Your request for handwritten notes is refused under section 9(2)(g)(i) of the OIA to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by officials.

There is one email, titled 'Meeting with MFA, 27 November 2023' which summarises the handwritten notes from the meeting and reports on the matters discussed. We have provided you with a summary of this email (section 16(e) of the OIA refers) as much of the information is withheld under the following sections of the OIA:

- 6(a): to avoid prejudicing the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the New Zealand Government;
- 9(2)(a): to protect individuals' privacy;
- 9(2)(f)(iv): to protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials; and
- 9(2)(g)(i): to protect the free and frank expression of opinions by departments.

This summary is attached as **Annex One**.

In addition to the Meeting with MFA, 27 November 2023 email summarised above, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Chris Seed published a short update for staff on the MFAT intranet which included some references to the initial meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. As the update contains information that is outside the scope of your information request, we have provided you with a summary of the relevant parts of the update below (section 16(e) of the OIA refers). This summary is attached as **Annex Two**.

Where the information has been withheld under section 9 of the OIA, we have identified no public interest in releasing the information that would override the reasons for withholding it.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Therefore, our response to your request (with your personal information removed) may be published on the MFAT website: [www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/contact-us/official-information-act-responses/](https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/contact-us/official-information-act-responses/)

If you have any questions about this decision, you can contact us by email at: [DM-ESD@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:DM-ESD@mfat.govt.nz). You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the

Ombudsman of this decision by contacting [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Sarah Corbett  
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

## **Annex One:**

### Summary of email titled Meeting with MFA, 27 November 2023

The meeting provided an opportunity to hand over the Ministry's Briefing for Incoming Minister, discuss the Government's priorities and pressing issues that would require Ministerial attention in the first days and weeks of the new Government.

The Ministry's budget was also discussed and the Secretary took the opportunity to brief the Minister on preparatory work under way to ensure that the Ministry was well-placed to answer any questions on baseline reductions.

The Secretary briefed the Minister on preparations to place a reserve against proposed amendments to WHO health regulations by 1 December (as set out in the National New Zealand First Coalition agreement).

The Minister expressed interest in an early engagement with the diplomatic corps before the end of the year and agreed that a small diplomatic function would be most efficient.

The Secretary handed over a submission seeking the Minister's agreement to range of diplomatic appointments.

## **Annex Two:**

### Summary of first discussions with new Ministers by Chris Seed

- Following the swearing-in of the new government on Monday 27 November, we have now had an initial meeting with our new Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Discussions were positive
- The Minister was clear about the government's foreign policy priorities and enthusiastic about working with us to progress the new Government's policy agenda
- We presented the Briefing to Incoming Minister of Foreign Affairs as the initial starting point for working with the new Minister
- Ministers are still in the process of standing-up their offices, getting connected to IT systems, and appointing political staff.
- The Ministry has already provided a significant amount of formal advice and will continue to provide advice at a steady rate in the coming days and weeks.
- Ministry to remain mindful of the considerable demands on new ministers' time and take care in how and when to engage them