

30 September 2021

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Tēnā koe Sebastian

I refer to your email of 10 May 2021 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

...This is a request for the following 9 documents:

ONE: I request a copy of the current Pacific Reset priority areas and work programme

TWO: Cabinet minute ERS-18-MIN-0028 noted that "A further omnibus report on the implementation of the Pacific Reset will be submitted to Cabinet before the end of 2019"

I request a copy of this report.

THREE: I request copies of all other Pacific Reset reports-back since the beginning of 2020

FOUR: Cabinet minute ERS-18-MIN-0028 also noted that "Significant progress has been made on a refreshed New Zealand approach to regional security, intended to align with and support implementation of the Boe Declaration"

I request a copy of the refreshed approach to regional security referred to here

FIVE: I also request a copy of MFAT's implementation plan for the Boe Declaration

SIX: I request a copy of CAB-18-MIN-0537

SEVEN: I request a copy of the Pacific Realm Policy Framework

EIGHT: The 2019-2020 MFAT Annual Report notes that "A 2019 stocktake of New Zealand agency engagement in the Realm strengthened awareness and highlighted opportunities for enhanced coordination in areas such as health, education and climate change"

I request a copy of this stocktake.

NINE: The 2019-2020 MFAT Annual Report also notes that "In June [2020], the Ministry prepared advice to the Minister of Foreign Affairs on recalibrating New Zealand's Pacific engagement to respond to the far-reaching and serious impacts of COVID-19 across the region in the short to medium term.

On 8 June 2021, the deadline to respond to your request was extended to 13 July 2021. On 13 July 2021, you were advised that the Ministry had made a decision on your request and that the information was in the final stages of preparation and review. Thank you for your

patience while this process was completed. The parts of your request have been addressed in turn, below.

1. *I request a copy of the current Pacific Reset priority areas and work programme*

Since New Zealand's Pacific Reset was announced in February 2018, Ministers and more than 30 government agencies have worked together to deepen New Zealand's Pacific relationships. The Pacific Reset, with its emphasis on what we were doing and how we were operating in the Pacific, has provided a robust framework for New Zealand's greater investment in the region over the past three and a half years. The priority areas of the Ministry's Pacific engagement are formulated in response to the priorities of the region. The Pacific Reset has also provided the necessary framework for New Zealand's initial response to the Pacific to mitigate risks from the global COVID-19 pandemic.

The Pacific region has suffered extensive economic and fiscal damage from COVID-19, in addition to negative health impacts in some countries. Over the past 12 months, the Ministry has worked flexibly and adaptively to preserve existing development projects, while pivoting New Zealand's development assistance to directly support the COVID-19 response. We have worked with each of our Pacific partners to deliver a response package that best supports a pathway to resilience and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

As we move out of the response phase in the Pacific we will look to work in partnership with our Pacific whanau to address challenges to longer term resilience such as: climate change, social inequality, lack of economic diversification and inclusion.

2. *"A further omnibus report on the implementation of the Pacific Reset will be submitted to Cabinet before the end of 2019". I request a copy of this report.*

Officials prepared advice for Cabinet on the implementation of the Pacific Reset in March 2020. However, this paper was not submitted to Cabinet due to COVID-19; therefore, we are withholding this paper under section 9(2)(f)(iv) and 9(2)(g)(i) of the OIA. Officials instead focused on applying the principles of the Pacific Reset to the emerging COVID-19 challenges in the 'Beyond the Pacific Reset: Recalibrating our Pacific engagement to respond to COVID-19' paper, included in the documents released under part 3 of your request.

3. *I request copies of all other Pacific Reset reports-back since the beginning of 2020.*

See attached documents.

4. *"Significant progress has been made on a refreshed New Zealand approach to regional security, intended to align with and support implementation of the Boe Declaration". I request a copy of the refreshed approach to regional security referred to here.*

The transboundary nature of contemporary security challenges means that New Zealand's domestic security is directly affected by the region's stability. This gives us a critical, long-term stake in the mitigation of security threats across our wider region. This requires New Zealand's whole of government efforts in the security sector to be coordinated and deliberate, building on the deep security relationships between New Zealand and counterpart agencies in the

Pacific that are long established, and in line with the priorities of the region articulated under the Boe Declaration (see below). While officials drafted a paper on these issues in 2018, it was not finalised nor considered by Ministers or Cabinet. On this basis, we are withholding this paper under section 9(2)(f)(iv) and 9(2)(g)(i) of the OIA.

5. *I also request a copy of MFAT's implementation plan for the Boe Declaration*

New Zealand is a member of the Pacific Islands Forum Subcommittee on Regional Security, which is the pre-eminent forum for officials' level discussions on regional security threats and implementation of the Boe Declaration. Through the work of the Subcommittee, the Boe Declaration Action Plan was developed, providing a framework for Forum Members – including New Zealand – to implement the Boe Declaration in collaboration with key regional and international stakeholders. The Action Plan sets out six Strategic Focus Areas including:

- Climate Security
- Human Security and Humanitarian Assistance
- Environmental and Resource Security
- Transnational Crime
- Cyber-enabled Crime and Cybersecurity
- Creating an enabling environment for implementation including an appropriate coordination mechanism.

The Boe Declaration is available online here: <https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/BOE-document-Action-Plan.pdf>

6. *I request a copy of CAB-18-MIN-0537*

Cabinet Minute CAB-18-MIN-0537 is attached.

The External Relations and Security Committee Minute and paper referred to in the above Minute are available online here: <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/vn/media-and-resources/the-pacific-reset-the-first-year/>

7. *I request a copy of the Pacific Realm Policy Framework*

A redacted version of the 2018 Cabinet Paper is attached. Some information has been withheld to avoid prejudicing the international relations of the New Zealand Government (section 6(a) of the OIA). A two-page summary of the Framework is also attached.

8. *The 2019-2020 MFAT Annual Report notes that: "A 2019 stocktake of New Zealand agency engagement in the Realm strengthened awareness and highlighted opportunities for enhanced coordination in areas such as health, education and climate change". I request a copy of this stocktake.*

A copy of the stocktake report is attached.

9. *The 2019-2020 MFAT Annual Report also notes that "In June [2020], the Ministry prepared advice to the Minister of Foreign Affairs on recalibrating New Zealand's Pacific engagement to respond to the far-reaching and serious impacts of COVID-19 across the region in the short to medium term". I request a copy of this advice.*

As noted above, the paper 'Beyond the Pacific Reset: Recalibrating our Pacific engagement to respond to COVID-19' is included in part 3 of your request above.

Some parts of the attached information have been 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;
- 6(b)(i): to protect the passing of information from another government on a confidential basis;
- 7(b): to prevent prejudice to relations between any of the Governments of New Zealand and Realm countries;
- 9(2)(a): to protect individuals' privacy;
- 9(2)(g)(i): to protect the free and frank expression of opinions by departments; and
- 9(2)(f)(iv): to protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials.

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.

You can also find further information in the Briefing for Incoming Ministers provided to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, available on the Ministry website here:

<https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/About-us-Corporate/MFAT-corporate-publications/Briefings-to-incoming-Ministers/Briefing-for-incoming-Minister-of-Foreign-Affairs-2020.pdf>

If you have any questions about this decision, you can contact us by email at: 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 or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Julie-Anne Lee
for Acting Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade