

17 August 2022

Sebastian

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OIA 28201

Tēnā koe Sebastian

I refer to your email on 25 July 2022 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

This is a request for information relating to strategic assessments produced by MFAT.

The 2020 MFAT Annual Report refers to a strategic assessment completed in 2019 (p.5):

"In 2019 we completed the first of what will be three yearly strategic assessments."

The 2021 MFAT Annual Report refers to a strategic assessment on the topic of COVID-19 (p.48):

"A refresh of our strategic framework saw us adopt a new purpose statement and strategic goals. This followed an extensive COVID-19-related strategic assessment, aimed at informing the Government's recovery objectives."

I would like to make a request for copies of:

ONE: The 2019 Strategic Assessment

TWO: The COVID-19-related strategic assessment referred to in the 2021 Annual Report above

THREE: If the MFAT Strategic Policy Unit has produced any other strategic assessments since the beginning of 2020, I would like to request a list of them, including the assessment title and date of issue

1. The 2019 Strategic Assessment

Responding to this part of your request necessitates the review of a large quantity and broad range of information, and meeting the original time limit would unreasonably interfere with the operations of the Ministry (section 15A(1)(a) of the OIA refers). Therefore, we need to extend the time limit for responding to this part of your request to 25 working days, to Tuesday 27 September 2022. However, we have made a decision on parts 2 and 3 of your request below.

2. The COVID-19-related strategic assessment referred to in the 2021 Annual Report

Please find attached the document titled "New Zealand's Foreign Policy 2021-22: Toward Greater Resilience". We have withheld some parts of the document 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;
- 9(2)(d): to protect the economic interests of New Zealand; and
- 9(2)(g)(i): to protect the free and frank expression of opinions by departments.

3. If the MFAT Strategic Policy Unit has produced any other strategic assessments since the beginning of 2020

The document titled "COVID-19 – Foreign Policy Re-engagement Strategy, 9 April 2020" constituted the Ministry's early thinking about a foreign policy re-engagement strategy that has since been overtaken and elaborated on by a Cabinet paper. As such, we are refusing this part of your request in full under section 9(2) (g)(i) of the OIA. However, we are providing you with a summary of the more recent and more comprehensive Cabinet paper, which was released on 26 June 2020 and is publicly available on the Covid19.govt.nz website here:

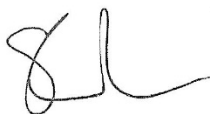
<https://covid19.govt.nz/updates-and-resources/legislation-and-key-documents/proactive-release/offshore-issues/#documents-proactively-released-on-26-june>.

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 we may publish this letter (with your personal details redacted) and enclosed documents on the Ministry's website.

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



Sarah Corbett
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade