



11 OCT 2019

On 11 September 2019, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *Information regarding policies or guidance that assist Private Secretaries to fulfil their roles and duties in Ministers' Offices.*

Private Secretaries play a crucial role as the primary day to day contact between the Minister and Ministry and are the key conduit for information between the two. They also play an active role as broker or facilitator on behalf of the Minister and Ministry.

The Private Secretary role is challenging, varied and exciting. It provides a hands-on learning opportunity by working directly with Ministers and Ministry leaders. The role of the Private Secretary can vary from office to office depending on differing Ministerial needs.

Constructive working relationships with Ministers are important and the Ministry works hard to ensure Private Secretaries are best placed to appropriately meet ministerial needs.

The Ministry's Private Secretaries are managed centrally within the Ministry and report to Ministerial and Executive Services. The role is overseen by the General Manager of Ministerial and Executive Services, as well as the Manager of Private Secretaries and Correspondence.

A key role of Ministerial and Executive Services is to provide timely support, advice and assistance to Private Secretaries to assist their success in fulfilling their roles.

The role of the Manager of Private Secretaries and Correspondence includes the provision of guidance and advice to assist Private Secretaries in their day to day tasks. To ensure a safe and healthy work environment, the Manager of Private Secretaries and Correspondence provides on-going pastoral care and facilitates the provision of external support to Private Secretaries as appropriate.

The management of Private Secretary recruitment, performance, pay, leave and some other arrangements are also led by the Manager of Private Secretaries and Correspondence.

All new Private Secretaries, including those providing short-term cover for the role, meet with the Manager of Private Secretaries and Correspondence to discuss the role, what is expected of them, and to ensure awareness of the range of support

they can receive throughout their secondment. Working in a Ministerial environment can also present challenges from time to time, as such clear means of escalation are also confirmed to ensure there is clarity on how to proceed, through seeking appropriate advice, support or guidance.

Each new Private Secretary will receive different information and training from the Ministry before and during the role, depending on their skills and experience, and the role they are going into. Prior to starting in the role, Private Secretaries receive a handover from the departing Private Secretary and are linked in with key portfolio contacts in the Ministry to ensure a close working relationship. A Ministerial office may also have instructions on their processes and guidelines, which will be shared with the Private Secretary.

Ministerial and Executive Services also ensures Private Secretaries continue to have access to training and development during their secondment. Training and seminar programmes are arranged on an as-needs basis to supplement the training provided by the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) Ministerial Services team. External training can also be provided if needed.

A Private Secretary's everyday task instructions are directed by the Senior Private Secretary and they are subject to the Code of Conduct set by Ministerial Services (DIA). Private Secretaries are also encouraged to use the information available to them on the Parliamentary intranet and training offered by Ministerial Services (DIA) as this provides the practical day-to-day information they require in the role.

Private Secretaries have regular group meetings with the Manager, Private Secretaries and Correspondence to allow for opportunities to resolve issues, discuss any areas of interest/development, and/or identify improvements or process changes. Monthly, the Ministry's Private Secretaries meet with the Ministry's leadership team to ensure strong working relationships, and to recognise the crucial role the Private Secretaries play in supporting the Ministry.

I can advise that the Ministry currently has eleven staff seconded to Private Secretary roles in Ministerial offices, five in the office for the Minister for Social Development and Minister for Disability Issues (Hon Carmel Sepuloni), one in the office for the Associate Minister of Housing (Public Housing) (Hon Kris Faafoi), one in the office for the Minister for Seniors (Hon Tracey Martin), one in the office for the Minister for Youth (Hon Peeni Henare), one in the office for the Minister of Employment (Hon Willie Jackson), and two in the office for the Associate Minister for Social Development (Hon Poto Williams).

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.


This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter

on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact QIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding Private Secretaries, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'EB', is positioned below the text 'Yours sincerely'.

Elisabeth Brunt
General Manager, Ministerial and Executive Services