

Open Government Partnership New Zealand

National Action Plan 2018-2020

Progress report: April 2021

Commitment 7: Official information

Lead agency: Ministry of Justice and the Public Service Commission

Objective: To improve the availability of official information by:

- providing advice to the Government on whether to initiate a formal review of official information legislation
- progressively increasing the proactive release of official information by publishing responses to requests for information made under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA). This commitment builds on work - undertaken as part of the National Action Plan 2016-2018 - on official information to make information more accessible, which promotes good government and trust and confidence in the State Services.

Ambition: New Zealanders:

- can have confidence that the regulation of official information remains fit-for-purpose
- have equitable access to official information released in response to specific requests.

OGP values: Public Participation, Transparency, Accountability

Milestones		Progress
1	Test the merits of undertaking a review of the Official Information Act 1982 and provide and publish advice to Government <i>Start date: Following the report back of the Privacy Bill</i> <i>End date: September 2019</i>	
2	Achieve a measurable increase in the proactive publication of official information request responses <i>Start/End dates: October 2018 to June 2020</i>	
3	Implement a policy to publish Cabinet papers proactively within 30 days of final decisions, unless there are good reasons to withhold specific papers <i>Start/End dates: October 2018 to June 2019</i>	

Progress key:



some delays



underway



completed

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING

Milestone 1:

- In the last quarter of 2019, the Ministry of Justice undertook targeted engagement on the Official Information Act 1982 to inform a decision on whether to progress a review of the Act. The Ministry's advice and a summary of the consultation was provided to the Minister of Justice.
- In March 2021, the advice and consultation summary document were published on the Ministry of Justice website at:
<https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/Proactive-release-OIA-review.pdf>
- The Minister of Justice will consider the potential for a review of the OIA later in this parliamentary term.

Milestone 2:

- The latest Official Information Act (OIA) statistics for 116 government agencies, covering the period July to December 2020, were released in March 2021. Overall, agencies responded to 24,631, or 97.2% of requests on time. Agencies completed 25,332 official information requests during the period, a sharp 27% increase in volume on the previous six months. Agencies published 1,876 OIA responses from July to December 2020, compared to 1,233 in the previous reporting period to June 2020, a 52% increase (following a drop in the January to June 2020 period). The number of OIA responses published is 65% up on the first six-month period of the National Action Plan period, which ran to December 2018 (during which 1,138 were published).

Milestone 3:

- The Cabinet paper establishing the policy, and associated advice, and a 30 working day calculator have been published on the Commission's website. The Cabinet Office Circular is published in HTML on the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet website.
- A dataset showing the publishing locations of agencies' Cabinet papers (where agencies use a centralised publication model), is also now available on the Commission's proactive release webpage and www.data.govt.nz. This Milestone has been completed.

HOW WE ARE INCLUDING DIVERSE VOICES

Milestone 1:

- The 2019 OIA consultation was publicly available through the Ministry of Justice Consultation Hub.

- The Ministry identified and emailed interested individuals and organisations, including those representing minority groups, inviting them to make written submissions. They also encouraged them to forward the invitation to others.

HOW WE ARE KEEPING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES INFORMED

Milestone 1:

- In January 2021, the Minister of Justice signalled that he will consider the potential for a review of the OIA later in the parliamentary term. Any updates on the status of a potential review of the Act will be provided in due course.

Milestone 2:

- The Commission has been taking steps to make to make the OIA data more accessible. It is now published in three different formats: Excel, Tableau (a tool that allows the user to filter, customise and download data), and a CSV file of the complete dataset going back to 2015/16, with agencies' unique identifiers allowing it to be combined with other datasets. The CSV file is available on both the Commission website and www.data.govt.nz.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Milestone 1

- The Minister signalled that he will consider the potential for a review of the OIA later in the parliamentary term.

Milestone 2

- The next OIA statistics collection covering the period January to June 2021 will take place in July 2021, for publication in September.

Milestone 3:

- The Commission continues to provide advice agencies on the publication of Cabinet papers as required. To support embedding of the policy the Commission intends to ask agencies to provide to the Commission data on their publication of papers on behalf of ministers, and continue to explore options for a centralised platform for the publication of Cabinet papers.

LINKS – EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS AND MILESTONES ACHIEVED

Milestone 1 - <https://consultations.justice.govt.nz/policy/access-to-official-information/>

Milestone 2 - <https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/resources/latest-oia-statistics-released-dec-2020/>

<https://catalogue.data.govt.nz/dataset/official-information/resource/106a9ff4-d017-470f-9220-adcf5db4095a>

Milestone 3 - <https://dpmc.govt.nz/publications/co-18-4-proactive-release-cabinet-material-updated-requirements>

<https://catalogue.data.govt.nz/dataset/official-information/resource/d4994315-2563-4adc-bced-e45cf5fda4e6>