



CABINET OFFICE

17 February 2022

John Trafalgar  
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Ref: OIA-2021/22-0876

Dear John Trafalgar

**Official Information Act request - PM Conflict of interest around COVID-19 response restrictions around weddings**

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 21 January 2022. You requested:

- 1 *Whether the Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has declared a conflict of interest whenever Cabinet is making any decision in relation to lock-downs and/or pandemic restrictions that touches on the protocols, requirements and/or controls around weddings/wedding ceremonies, since the beginning of the Wuhan Coronavirus Virus pandemic (which WHO branded as "COVID-19").*
- 2 *If not, why not?*

Ministers, including the Prime Minister, are responsible for ensuring that no conflict exists or appears to exist between their personal duties and their public duty. The Cabinet Office provides guidance and advice to all Ministers, including the Prime Minister, regarding the management of conflicts of interest.

Guidance about the management of conflicts of interests by Ministers is set out in chapter 2 of the *Cabinet Manual*. The guidance in the *Cabinet Manual* relates to both pecuniary interests (for example, an interest that arises from the Minister's direct financial interests) and non-pecuniary interests (for example relating to an interest of a whānau member). Detailed guidance about both types of interest can be located at [2.63] – [2.71] in the *Cabinet Manual*.

The *Cabinet Manual* states at [2.71]: “[a] conflict will not generally arise from a generic interest held as one of a class of persons or held in common with the public: for example, an interest in education issues where the Minister has school-age children, or an interest in issues affecting Māori where the Minister is Māori.”

Successive Ombudsmen have formed the opinion that there are good reasons to withhold information held by the Cabinet Office about actual or possible conflicts of interest declared by

Ministers. However, in the present case, I can advise that the information you have requested does not exist. Therefore, I refuse your request under s 18(e) of the Act.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

We do not intend to publish this response on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website.

Yours sincerely



Michael Webster  
**Secretary of the Cabinet**