

7 November 2024

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Tēnā koe Alan Riley

Thank you for your email of 10 October 2024 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

*"I would like to understand MFAT's processes associated with making diplomatic appointments, including (by way of example) Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Head of Mission. I'd therefore like to request any policy, process, guidance or other documents held by MFAT that set out the process for appointing such positions. Could I also please request a copy of diplomatic appointments made in the last twelve months and an understanding of the process for appointment. "*

All Head of Mission and Head of Post vacancies are advertised internally, with a panel (a subset of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)) reviewing applications received and assessing the merits of candidates for the available posts. This may include a mix of interviews, references, and other assessments.

The panel then puts forward its recommendations to the Chief Executive and Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade for consideration. The Chief Executive and Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade then provides the Minister of Foreign Affairs with his recommendations for Heads of Mission or Heads of Post appointments.

Appointees are subject to confirmation (Agrément) by receiving governments, in accordance with Article 4 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations or Article 12 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. Once received, the Minister of Foreign Affairs confirms the appointment to the Governor-General. All diplomatic appointments are then announced via media statement, in line with the practice established by successive governments.

The process of diplomatic appointments in New Zealand is governed by the Foreign Affairs Act 1988 and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations 1961. The relevant sections are provided below.

Section 4 of the Foreign Affairs Act 1988:

4 Appointment of head of mission or head of post

(1) The Governor-General may from time to time appoint or reappoint any person as a head of mission or head of post.

(2) The procedure put in place by the Secretary pursuant to clause 5 of Schedule 8 of the Public Service Act 2020 shall not apply to any appointment or reappointment of a head of mission or head of post.

Article 4 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations 1961:

Article 4

1. The sending State must make certain that the agrément of the receiving State has been given for the person it proposes to accredit as head of the mission to that State.

2. The receiving State is not obliged to give reasons to the sending State for a refusal of agrément.

Regarding diplomatic appointments in the last 12 months, all Head of Mission/Head of Post appointments can be viewed publicly on the Beehive website. Accordingly, this part of your request is refused under section 18(d) of the OIA, as the information is publicly available. The following are all the announcements from the last 12 months:

- 1 October 2024 [New diplomatic appointments | Beehive.govt.nz](#)
- 7 May 2024 [Ambassador to United States appointed | Beehive.govt.nz](#)
- 22 April 2024 [New diplomatic appointments | Beehive.govt.nz](#)
- 21 March 2024 [New diplomatic appointments | Beehive.govt.nz](#)
- 9 February 2024 [New diplomatic appointments | Beehive.govt.nz](#)
- 13 December 2023 [New diplomatic appointments | Beehive.govt.nz](#)

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Therefore, our response to your request (with your personal information removed) may be published on the Ministry website:

[www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/contact-us/official-information-act-responses/](http://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/contact-us/official-information-act-responses/)

If you have any questions about this decision, you can contact us by email at: [DM-ESD@mfat.govt.nz](mailto: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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Sarah Corbett  
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade