

29 April 2026

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OIA 30799

G Mitchells

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Tēnā koe G Mitchells

I refer to your email of 2 March 2026, to Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC), in which you requested information under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA). On 13 March 2026, the following parts of your request were transferred from DPMC to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (the Ministry) under section 14(b) of the OIA for response:

"I am writing to request information under the Official Information Act 1982 regarding the visit of the Commonwealth Secretary-General to New Zealand on 13 February 2026.

4. *The titles or official roles of attendees at official events associated with the visit (excluding personal names where appropriate);*
5. *The stated purpose of the visit, including any official objectives, agendas, or briefing materials prepared in advance."*

On 14 April 2026, the timeframes for responding to your request were extended by an additional 10 working days due to the consultations necessary to make a decision on your request (section 15A(1)(b) of the OIA refers).

The Ministry has interpreted part four of your request as seeking only the titles or official roles of attendees at official events associated with the visit. Accordingly, some names have been removed from the attached documents as out of scope.

Response to your request

Attached are the following documents in scope of your request:

1. PGOG Request Form – Commonwealth Secretary-General visit February 2026, dated 21 January 2026
2. MFA Meeting Brief – Commonwealth Secretary-General visit – 13 February 2026, dated 10 February 2026

Some information is withheld 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;

- 6(b)(ii): to protect the passing of information from an international organisation on a confidential basis; and
- 9(2)(g)(i): to protect the free and frank expression of opinions by departments.

Where the information has been withheld under section 9 of the OIA, no public interest in releasing the information has been identified that would override the reasons for withholding it.

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/

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SC', written in a cursive style.

Sarah Corbett
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Out of scope

<p>Policy objectives</p>	<p>Advocate for New Zealand’s Commonwealth reform interests and discuss our priorities ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2026.</p> <p>Reinforce New Zealand’s view that the Commonwealth is best placed to add value by focusing on its core mission (promoting democracy, good governance, human rights, and the rule of law) and delivering tangible outcomes for small states including in the Pacific.</p> <p>Reaffirm New Zealand’s commitment to the Commonwealth notwithstanding cessation of our core funding to its development entities. In particular, highlighting the value New Zealand places on the Commonwealth’s delivery for the Pacific.</p>														
<p>High Level Programme for VCO to seek costings for PGOG Status</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td colspan="2" data-bbox="602 1079 1377 1129"> <p>Thursday 12 February</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="602 1129 980 1220"> <p>Transfer from AKL international airport to hotel</p> </td> <td data-bbox="980 1129 1377 1220"> <p>Delegation arrives 17:00</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" data-bbox="602 1220 1377 1270"> <p>Friday 13 February</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="602 1270 980 1348"> <p>Bilateral meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs</p> </td> <td data-bbox="980 1270 1377 1348"> <p>11.00 – 12.00</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="602 1348 980 1430"> <p>Lunch hosted by Minister of Foreign Affairs</p> </td> <td data-bbox="980 1348 1377 1430"> <p>12:00 – 13:00</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" data-bbox="602 1430 1377 1480"> <p>Saturday 14 February 2026</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="602 1480 980 1558"> <p>Transfer to AKL international airport</p> </td> <td data-bbox="980 1480 1377 1558"> <p>Delegation departing flight 13:25</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>Thursday 12 February</p>		<p>Transfer from AKL international airport to hotel</p>	<p>Delegation arrives 17:00</p>	<p>Friday 13 February</p>		<p>Bilateral meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs</p>	<p>11.00 – 12.00</p>	<p>Lunch hosted by Minister of Foreign Affairs</p>	<p>12:00 – 13:00</p>	<p>Saturday 14 February 2026</p>		<p>Transfer to AKL international airport</p>	<p>Delegation departing flight 13:25</p>
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Out of scope

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

Meeting Brief: Hon Shirley Botchwey, Commonwealth Secretary-General

Time and date: 11.00am-1.00pm, Friday 13 February



Hon. Shirley Botchwey was elected as the 7th Commonwealth Secretary-General at CHOGM in Samoa (2024). Botchwey is Ghanaian and is the first woman from Africa to hold the role. She has prioritised a comprehensive reform agenda, focused on accountability and effectiveness.

Botchwey is a former Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration (2017–2024). She has also served in Ghana's National Security Council. In both roles she led significant reforms to strengthen Ghana's foreign policy delivery and consular services. As Foreign Minister, Botchwey chaired the Council of Ministers of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) from 2020-2022, which included leading democratic transitions and regional institutional reform processes. Botchwey played a key role in securing financing for African Union-led peace operations during Ghana's term on the Security Council (2022-23).

Botchwey previously served as Ghana's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Information, and Trade and Industry (2001-2009) and as a Member of Parliament for four terms (2005–2021). Prior to public office, she worked in marketing, communications, and tourism consulting.

Agenda

	Out of scope
	Out of scope
11.00am	Bilateral Meeting
	Out of scope
	Out of scope
12.00pm	Private Lunch , Onemata Restaurant, Ground Floor
	Out of scope

Checklist of issues

- Register New Zealand's support of the Secretary-General's intention to lift the Commonwealth's accountability and effectiveness.
- Seek her reflections on her first year in office, including progress in her **reform agenda**. What challenges is she facing, and how does she assess prospects for achieving reform.
- Share **New Zealand's reform priorities**, noting our view that the Commonwealth's value would be better served through a renewed focus on where it has comparative advantage and delivers its core mandate (democracy, good governance, human rights, the rule of law).
- Discuss the Secretary-General's recent engagements in Suva and exchange views on the role of the **Commonwealth in the Pacific**. Highlight the value we see in the Commonwealth's ability to deliver for small states, particularly in the Pacific in areas where the Commonwealth has a comparative advantage relative to other entities.
- Seek her outlook on the year ahead. What are her expectations for **key issues at CHOGM 2026** in Antigua and Barbuda in November?

- Ask what she thinks is the distinct role of the Commonwealth in light of broader challenges to multilateralism.

Reactive: Request for New Zealand to reinstate/increase Commonwealth funding

- Reaffirm New Zealand's continued support for the Commonwealth Small States Office (CSSO) and its valuable role in assisting Small Island Developing States participation in multilateral fora.
- Commend Botchwey's proactive approach to resolving donor concerns, while managing expectations about New Zealand funding. Note New Zealand's decision to phase-out most voluntary funding to the Commonwealth Secretariat funds in 2025 reflected a consolidation of its core multilateral investments due to the domestic financial environment, which has not changed.

If Raised: Proposal to establish a Pacific Commonwealth office:

- Acknowledge efforts to enhance the Commonwealth's engagement with the Pacific. s6(b)(i) New Zealand welcomes further discussion to ensure the proposal is fit for purpose.

Background

- Secretary-General (SG) Botchwey is visiting New Zealand following the **Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting in Nadi**, ahead of onward travel to Australia. Botchwey met London HOM, Hamish Cooper, ahead of her visit to New Zealand.
- s6(b)(ii)
- In 2025 New Zealand decided to phase-out most *voluntary* Commonwealth funding to the Commonwealth Secretariat funds. New Zealand maintains *assessed* (mandatory) contributions (GBP352,000 per annum) and has retained *targeted support* for the Commonwealth Small States Office (CSSO) (NZ\$750,000 per annum). s6(a)
- s6(b)(ii)
- Botchwey may seek New Zealand's support for establishing a **Pacific regional Commonwealth office** (proposed by the Secretariat in 2024). s6(a), s6(b)(i)
- The **Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Minister Meeting** (CFAMM) is occurring in London on 8 March. New Zealand will be represented by High Commissioner Hamish Cooper (whom Botchwey met in an introductory call on 27 January).
- The next **Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting** (CHOGM) will be hosted by Antigua and Barbuda (1 – 4 November). New Zealand's attendance has not been confirmed yet. s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

Attendees: Bilateral meeting

The Right Honourable Winston Peters Foreign Minister	The Honourable Shirley Botchway Commonwealth Secretary-General
Out of scope Deputy-Secretary, Multilateral and Legal Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade	Out of scope Chief of Staff to the Commonwealth Secretary-General
Out of scope Divisional Manager, United Nations Human Rights and Commonwealth Division Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade	Out of scope Political Advisor and Head of Pacific, Commonwealth Secretariat
Out of scope Foreign Policy Advisor Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs	Out of scope Office manager Commonwealth Secretariat
Out of scope Policy Officer, United Nations Human Rights and Commonwealth Division Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade	

Bilateral seating plan

Out of scope

X		X
X		X
X		X
X		X
X		

Out of scope

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

Attendees: Lunch

The Right Honourable Winston Peters Foreign Minister	The Honourable Shirley Botchway Commonwealth Secretary General
Out of scope Deputy-Secretary, Multilateral and Legal Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade	Out of scope Chief of Staff to the Secretary-General
Out of scope Divisional Manager, United Nations Human Rights and Commonwealth Division Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade	Out of scope Political Advisor and Head of Pacific, Commonwealth Secretariat
Out of scope Foreign Policy Advisor Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs	Out of scope Office manager Commonwealth Secretariat

Additional guests	
Out of scope	CEO of the Auckland Chamber of Commerce. Out of scope
Out of scope	Out of scope Vice-Chancellor of Auckland University of Technology. Out of scope

Lunch seating plan

Out of scope

X		X
X		X
X		X
X		X
X		X

Out of scope