



Internal Affairs Te Tari Taiwhenua

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25 June 2026

James Welsh

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Tēnā koe James,

Your Official Information Act 1982 request OIA2526-1270

Thank you for your email of 27 May 2026 to the Department of Internal Affairs, requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

- *All records relied upon to determine the Minister's eligibility for accommodation allowance payments.*
- *All records demonstrating the basis upon which accommodation allowance payments of approximately \$1,000 per week were calculated, approved, reviewed, audited, or authorised.*
- *Confirmation of whether the Minister has declared ownership, part ownership, beneficial ownership, trust ownership, or any other legal or equitable interest in residential property within the Wellington region for the purposes of determining eligibility for accommodation assistance or accommodation allowances.*
- *Any assessments, reviews, investigations, audits, compliance checks, or verification processes undertaken in relation to the Minister's accommodation allowance claims.*
- *Any documents recording housing costs, accommodation expenses, rental obligations, ownership costs, mortgage-related costs, body corporate costs, rates, insurance costs, or other expenses that were taken into account when determining entitlement to accommodation allowance payments.*
- *Any documents discussing whether property ownership within Wellington affects eligibility for accommodation allowance payments, and how such ownership is assessed.*
- *Any documents discussing the appropriateness of accommodation allowance payments being made where the recipient owns, wholly or partly owns, a residential property in Wellington.*
- *Any correspondence, briefings, talking points, media responses, or advice prepared in relation to public scrutiny of the Minister's accommodation allowance claims.*
- *Any analysis, discussion, or advice concerning whether the standards proposed for Accommodation Supplement recipients are materially different from those applied when assessing ministerial accommodation allowances.*



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- *All documents recording the rationale for the current level of accommodation allowance payable to Ministers and Members of Parliament, including any analysis of what constitutes a reasonable or necessary accommodation cost in Wellington.*
- *Any documents discussing whether accommodation allowances should be means-tested, asset-tested, income-tested, or otherwise subject to financial eligibility criteria.*
- *Any documents considering whether recipients of ministerial accommodation allowances should be required to make a minimum personal contribution toward accommodation costs before receiving taxpayer-funded assistance.*
- *Any documents comparing accommodation allowance arrangements available to Ministers and MPs with accommodation assistance available to beneficiaries, superannuitants, low-income workers, students, or other members of the public.*
- *Any documents discussing public perceptions of fairness, equity, consistency, or public confidence in relation to accommodation allowances claimed by Ministers.*
- *Any documents discussing whether ownership of residential property should reduce, limit, offset, or eliminate eligibility for accommodation allowances.*
- *Any documents recording actual accommodation costs incurred by the Minister that were relevant to determining, approving, or justifying accommodation allowance payments.*
- *Any documents discussing whether accommodation allowance payments exceed, match, or fall below actual accommodation expenses incurred by the Minister.*
- *Any guidance, policies, manuals, operational instructions, or internal procedures used to verify that accommodation allowance payments reflect genuine accommodation expenses.*
- *Any audits, reviews, investigations, assurance reports, compliance checks, or exception reports concerning accommodation allowance claims made by Ministers or MPs during the last ten years.*
- *Any documents discussing whether accommodation allowance recipients are required to demonstrate financial need before receiving taxpayer-funded accommodation assistance.*
- *Any documents discussing whether accommodation allowances should be available to individuals whose personal income exceeds specified thresholds.*
- *Any documents discussing whether accommodation allowances should be available to individuals who own one or more residential properties.*
- *Any documents discussing whether accommodation allowances should be capped by reference to actual housing costs, market rents, mortgage costs, or other measurable accommodation expenses.*
- *Any documents discussing the reputational, political, ethical, or governance risks associated with Ministers receiving accommodation allowances while proposing stricter accommodation assistance criteria for members of the public.*
- *Any documents, emails, messages, meeting notes, briefings, talking points, draft responses, or correspondence prepared following media enquiries concerning comparisons between ministerial accommodation allowances and Accommodation Supplement eligibility criteria.*



- *Any documents discussing whether accommodation allowance recipients would satisfy the same housing-cost-to-income thresholds proposed for Accommodation Supplement recipients.*
- *Any documents identifying recipients of accommodation allowances whose housing costs represent less than 40% of their gross income.*
- *Any documents discussing whether accommodation allowances constitute a subsidy, reimbursement, entitlement, allowance, benefit, assistance payment, or other form of taxpayer-funded housing support, including any discussion of the terminology used to describe such payments.*
- *Any documents discussing potential reforms, reductions, restrictions, eligibility changes, or abolition of ministerial or parliamentary accommodation allowances.*
- *Any communications between Ministers, ministerial staff, parliamentary officials, the Remuneration Authority, Treasury, or officials regarding criticism of accommodation allowance arrangements.*
- *Lastly, and most importantly, morally, are these your values?*

Extension of your request

Under section 15A(1)(b) of the Act, the timeframe to respond to your request has been extended by 10 working days from 25 June 2026 to **9 July 2026**. This is because the consultations necessary to make a decision on your request are such that a proper response to the request cannot reasonably be made within the original time limit.

I will endeavour to provide you with a response earlier if possible.

Accessing the Ombudsman

You have the right to seek an investigation and review of my decision by the Office of the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā

Penny Langley

Director Branch Performance

Partnerships and Commissions - Te Aukaha

Department of Internal Affairs - Te Tari Taiwhenua