



19 June 2023

Ms Gerardine Clifford-Lidstone  
Secretary for Pacific Peoples

By email: 9(2)(a) privacy

Talofa lava Gerardine

### **Sensitive expenditure by the Ministry for Pacific Peoples – expansion of scope**

As you are aware the Public Service Commission has been reviewing the sensitive expenditure associated with the two day, all staff, fono and farewell for the departing Secretary for Pacific Peoples, which occurred on 13 – 14 October 2022. A copy of our original letter advising of this review and scope is attached.

As a result of further information received, I have decided to expand the scope of the review to include expenditure relating to a welcome event for Leauanae Laulu Mac Leauanae as incoming Secretary for Culture and Heritage held on 17 October 2022.

Please note this expanded review does not replace the initial review but is an expansion of the original scope.

### **Purpose of the expanded review**

The purpose of the expanded review is to consider whether decisions about sensitive expenditure associated with the welcome event aligned with your own agency's policies and guidelines as well as system guidance.

### **Additional matters within scope**

The review will now also look into the expenditure incurred in relation to the welcome event. This includes the:

- expenditure of both the Ministry for Pacific Peoples and the Ministry for Culture and Heritage relating to the welcome event
- planning and decision-making in relation to the event, in particular decisions that gave rise to expenditure
- authorisation of expenditure.

These matters will be considered against applicable policies, procedures, and expectations of the agencies, taking into account the context of the event, including the cultural context.

Specifically, the review will consider whether the expenditure decisions were:

- **for a justifiable business purpose** that is consistent with the Ministry's objectives;
- **impartial** - decisions were based on objective criteria, rather than based on any sort of bias, preference, or improper reason;
- **made with integrity**
- **moderate and conservative** when viewed from the standpoint of the public and given the circumstances of the spending;
- **made transparently** - being open about the spending, and willing to explain any spending decisions or have them reviewed; and
- **made with proper authority** - the person approving the spending has the appropriate financial delegation to do so, for the type and amount of spending and follows correct procedures.

### **Documents requested**

To support this review, I would be grateful if you could provide the Commission with an electronic copy of all the documents that the Ministry holds in relation to the welcome event that are within the expanded scope as outlined above. This should include all internal and external communications about the event, such as invoices, approval confirmations, letters, emails, all internally generated documents, planning documents, and any other related material.

The Commission already has a copy of relevant policies received a part of our initial review. Can you please confirm there has been no change in relevant policies between the time of the fono and farewell and the welcome event.

Please use the current document collection process established for the original review. I would be grateful if all documents could be uploaded by 23 June 2023. Please ensure you consider any privacy considerations when providing the review with the relevant documents.

### **The process of the expanded review**

The review team will be led by Deputy Commissioner Hugo Vitalis, Integrity, Ethics and Standards, supported by staff from the Commission.

The first step will be for the review team to assess the relevant documentation and form an initial view that can be tested with your agency. As part of this first step, I would be grateful if you could ensure that key staff are available to answer any clarification questions that the review team may have. This is not an inquiry so we do not envisage conducting interviews, but it may assist the review team to check their understanding of key issues with those who were involved in the process.

I am conscious that this may be a stressful time for the Ministry and for the individuals involved in this matter. For that reason, my expectation is that the entire review process will be completed by mid to late July 2023. The final report will be published on the Commission's website, but it will not identify any individuals by name and your agency will have the opportunity to comment on the draft report before it is finalised.

### **Related Official Information Act and media requests**

It is in the public interest that the integrity of this review is not undermined by the partial release of documentation that the team is considering into the public domain while the review is underway.

The ordinary practice is for that kind of material to become public at the end of any Commission review. Releasing it earlier risks damaging public trust and confidence in the process.

Therefore, if your agency receives a request under the Official Information Act 1982 for any information or documents within the scope of this review, then please contact your Assistant Commissioner immediately so that we can provide you with advice. Similar considerations will apply in relation to media requests or parliamentary questions.

Thank you for your ongoing co-operation.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Hughes (he/him)  
Te Tumu Whakarae mō Te Kawa Mataaho  
Public Service Commissioner | Head of Service