

# He Aratohu

A guide for  
public servants  
on matters of  
integrity and  
conduct



**Te Kawa Mataaho**  
Public Service Commission



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**He Aratohu is also available in HTML at**

[He Aratohu: A guide for public servants on matters of integrity and conduct](#)

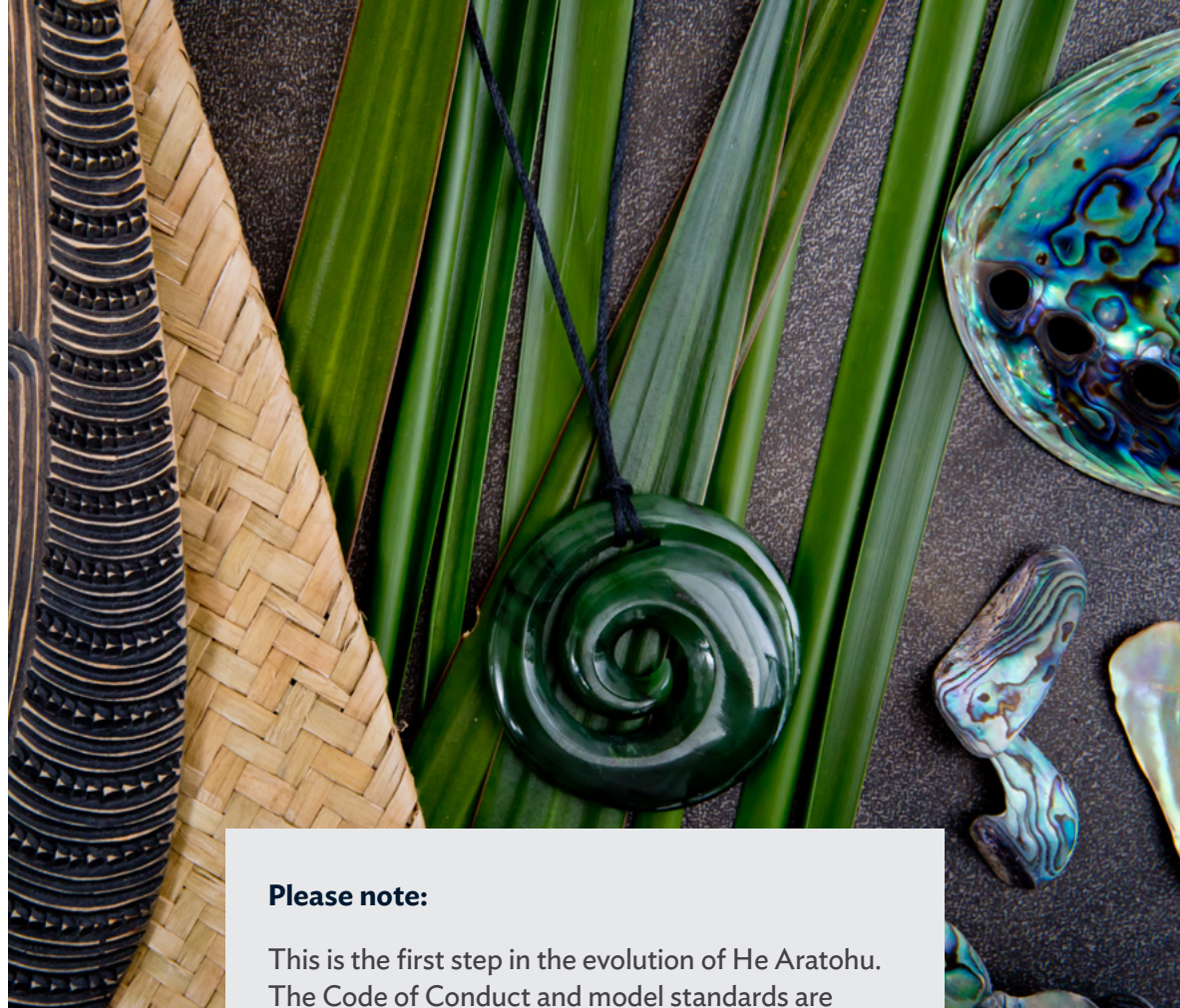
# Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa, welcome to He Aratohu.

He Aratohu puts the expectations for integrity and conduct in the Public Service, into one easily accessible resource.

He Aratohu is a composite of two words ara and tohu. Ara is a route, path or course. Tohu are symbols, signs, distinguishing features or directions. An aratohu is a pathway that has been scouted and the distinguishing features marked to make the journey of the traveller safer. He Aratohu identifies important resources that help the Public Service navigate issues of conduct and integrity.

The resources available include the expectations set by Te Tumu Whakarae mō Te Kawa Mataaho, Public Service Commissioner through the Code of Conduct (including the separate Codes of Conduct for ministerial staff and Crown entity board members and Directors of Public Finance Act 1989 Schedule 4A companies), model standards and guidance either issued by Te Kawa Mataaho or endorsed guidance provided by another organisation.

As public servants, we and our agencies have a duty to uphold high standards of integrity and conduct. New Zealand's public sector is in the privileged position of having high levels of public trust and confidence. However, this shouldn't be taken for granted. We need to keep behaving in a way that retains the faith of Ministers, Parliament and people of New Zealand, or we will lose our legitimacy and undermine the credibility we need to do our work. We must be able to show we are trustworthy, that we act in the interests of the people in New Zealand, and never for our personal gain.



### **Please note:**

This is the first step in the evolution of He Aratohu. The Code of Conduct and model standards are currently issued under the State Sector Act 1988 and continue to reflect previous language. Further editions will provide updated language, including a refreshed Code of Conduct that aligns with the principles and values set out in the Public Service Act 2020. In the meantime, this version contains all current material.

**He Aratohu consists of:**

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# Ngā Paerewa mō te Ngākau Tapatahi me te Whanonga | Standards of Integrity and Conduct

The Standards of Integrity and Conduct (the Code) was issued by the then State Services Commissioner under section 57, of the State Sector Act 1988. The Code continues to have effect under the Public Service Act 2020. It applies to all employees of the organisations defined in section 17(2) of the Act.

All public servants, regardless of their department or agency, must act with a spirit of service to the community and meet the standards of integrity and conduct set out in the Code. Most agencies have their own supplementary codes, supported by internal policies and processes. Breaches of the Code are managed through employment arrangements at the agency level, in the first instance.

By maintaining the expectations set out in the Code, public servants enable the Public Service to maintain the trust and confidence of people in New Zealand.

Separate codes have been issued for ministerial staff and Crown entity board members. The Board code applies to board members of statutory entities (excluding corporation sole) and Crown entity company boards (excluding Crown research institutes and their subsidiaries).



## **Please note:**

A refreshed code reflecting the principles, values and language used in the Public Service Act 2020 is in development. The current code continues to apply until a new code is issued.



## **Te Tauaki Whanonga mā ngā Kaimahi Minita | Code of Conduct for ministerial staff**

Ministerial staff are public servants who are employed on events-based employment agreements by the Department of Internal Affairs and who work directly to a minister in a minister's office rather than in a department. Ministerial staff have an important role in providing advice and support to ministers in the performance of their ministerial functions. The nature of the role means that ministerial staff are not required to be politically neutral, and therefore the Standards of Integrity and Conduct do not apply to ministerial staff. To cover their situation, a specific code for ministerial staff has been issued.



# Te Tauaki Whanonga mā ngā Mema Poari o ngā Hinonga Karauna | Code of Conduct for Crown entity board members

Crown entities deliver public services, exercise significant powers, and directly impact the lives of people in New Zealand. To be effective in this, Crown entities must have the trust and confidence of both the Government and the people in New Zealand.

Boards oversee the operations and performance of Crown entities. All board members bring a spirit of service to the community and a desire to improve the wellbeing of the nation and of te ao Māori (consistent with Te Tiriti o Waitangi). A key requirement of the board member's role is to act with the highest levels of integrity and professional and personal standards.

The Code of Conduct for Crown entity board members has been issued by the Public Service Commissioner to all board members of statutory entities (excluding corporations sole) and Crown entity companies (excluding Crown research institutes and their subsidiaries).

**Ngā kōnae e hāngai ana | Related files:**

[Board Appointment and Induction Guidelines](#)



# He Tikanga Arataki mā ngā Kamupene Āpitihangā 4A o te Ture Kaiwhakahaere Pūtea Tūmatanui 1989 | Code of Conduct for the Directors of Public Finance Act 1989 Schedule 4A Companies

Public Finance Act 1989 Schedule 4A companies are an important part of the public sector and must have the trust and confidence of the Government and New Zealanders. This Code sets out the minimum standards of integrity and conduct for directors and should be read in conjunction with the duties of directors as set out in the Companies Act 1993 and other applicable legislation. The board should also have a charter or governance manual in place to guide its governance activities.

**Code of Conduct for the Directors of  
Public Finance Act 1989 Schedule 4A Companies**

## Ngā Paerewa kia Tutuki | Model standards

Model standards set out the Public Service Commissioner's minimum expectations for agencies and staff on specific integrity issues.

## He ārahitanga | Guidance

Te Kawa Mataaho has provided guidance – or endorsed the guidance provided by other organisations – on a number of other topics relating to integrity and conduct.



# Ngā Wāhi Mahi Pai, Haumaru anō hoki | Positive and safe workplaces

All Public Service employees and contractors are entitled to a safe and inclusive workplace, where people treat one another with respect and work together to deliver for people in New Zealand. This takes organisational commitment and real effort from leaders, managers, and individual staff members. There is need for strong leadership, constructive working relationships, and good policies and procedures.

Unfortunately, our agencies are not immune to the challenges that all workplaces face. The way we deal with inappropriate behaviours is important. Building a workplace culture that promotes respect, inclusion, trust and productivity will go a long way to preventing inappropriate behaviour from occurring.

These model standards set out the Public Service Commissioner's minimum expectations for staff and organisations in the Public Service to ensure positive and safe workplaces.

## **Please note:**

The current model standards reflect language used under the State Sector Act 1988. All model standards will soon be updated to reflect the language used in the Public Service Act 2020. The current model standards continue to apply until then.

**Ngā kōnae e hāngai ana | Related files:**

[Positive and safe workplaces model standards](#)

[Response role cards for managers, employees and bystanders: inappropriate behaviour concern/complaint](#)

New Zealand Defence Force case study: [Sexual ethics and respectful relationships: Creating a positive workplace culture](#)

[Government Health and Safety Lead's Positive Workplace Cultures agency workbook](#): a tool to support agencies in creating positive workplace cultures.

[Safe to talk | Kōrero mai ka ora](#) – this helpline provides free, confidential 24/7 support to people affected by sexual harm.

[1737 – Need to Talk?](#) Is New Zealand's national mental health helpline number, and part of the National Telehealth Service

[WorkSafe's bullying prevention toolbox](#) provides tools and resources to help guide organisations and individuals in preventing bullying in the workplace.

[Employment mediation services](#) within the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment is a free service for any employee or employer with an employment relationship problem.

# Te whakapuaki kōrero | Speaking up

The reputation of our Public Service depends on our ability to build and maintain a culture that promotes speaking up about wrongdoing. Good policies and processes that encourage staff to speak up about possible wrongdoing are vital for maintaining the integrity of the Public Service.

These model standards outline the Public Service Commissioner's minimum expectations for organisations to support staff on speaking up about wrongdoing concerns that could damage the integrity of the Public Service. They contain all the key elements for promoting a 'speak up' culture, operating good processes (including timely investigations), and keeping people safe from reprisals or other detrimental impacts.

These are the standards expected of all organisations within the Public Service – organisations will determine whether additional policies and processes are required. All organisations should ensure that these standards are integrated into policies and processes for reporting wrongdoing in their human resource, employment relations, and operational management systems.

## Please note:

The current model standards reflect language used under the State Sector Act 1988. All model standards will soon be updated to reflect the language used in the Public Service Act 2020. The current model standards continue to apply until then.

## There are three key elements to these standards:

1. **Getting the foundations right from the start:** organisational commitment to leadership, raising awareness, and supporting staff and managers through regular communication and training.
2. **Making sure processes are robust:** taking concerns seriously when they are raised, by ensuring systems are in place for monitoring, reporting, investigation, and effectively communicating with those involved in a report or disclosure.
3. **Keeping people safe:** ensure they can feel safe in making reports and trust that organisations will act upon them, and ensure that organisations provide tailored and dedicated support and protections to staff to keep them safe from reprisal.

## Ngā kōnae e hāngai ana | Related files:

[Speaking up model standards](#)

[Protected Disclosures \(Protection of Whistleblowers\) Act 2022](#)

[Serious Wrongdoing at Work \(whistleblowing\) – Ombudsman New Zealand](#)

# Te whakatūturu ohumahi | Workforce assurance

Integrity and ethical behaviour are core Public Service values that must be reinforced through our recruitment processes. We need to apply the right checks when employing people, and ensure that any serious integrity issues are disclosed. This is important in maintaining the public's trust and confidence in the Public Service.

The workforce assurance model standards outline expectations for Public Service departments and statutory Crown entities when recruiting staff. They also set out expectations for serious misconduct investigations and settlement agreements.

## Ngā kōnae e hāngai ana | Related files:

[Workforce assurance model standards](#)

[Workforce assurance support pack](#)

[Workforce assurance FAQ](#)

### Please note:

The current model standards reflect language used under the State Sector Act 1988. All model standards will soon be updated to reflect the language used in the Public Service Act 2020. The current model standards continue to apply until then.

# Ngā Tauaki pānga | Conflicts of interest

The reputation of our Public Service depends on our ability to be impartial in our decision making, and to exercise a high standard of judgement with real and perceived conflicts of interest.

In a small country like New Zealand, conflicts of interest in our working lives are natural and unavoidable. The existence of a conflict of interest doesn't necessarily mean someone has done something wrong. But organisations need good policies and processes to deal with conflicts of interest appropriately, and staff need to be alert to the possibility of conflicts of interest and promptly report any that occur.

These model standards outline the Public Service Commissioner's minimum expectations for staff and organisations in the Public Service to support effective reporting and management of conflicts of interest.

## Ngā kōnae e hāngai ana | Related files:

[Conflicts of interest model standards](#)

[Managing conflicts of interest: A guide for the public sector](#)  
– Office of the Auditor-General Crown Entities Act 2004  
(sections [31](#) and [62](#))

[Board Appointment and Induction Guidelines](#)

# Ngā takoha, ngā takuhe me ngā whakapaunga a Te Tumu Whakahaere | Chief executive gifts, benefits and expenses

Chief executives of Public Service departments and statutory Crown entities regularly disclose their expenses to provide transparency and accountability for their discretionary expenditure. The disclosures make transparent the standards of probity and financial prudence, and provide public assurance that expenditure has been consistent with these standards. This requirement is in line with international practice, and in New Zealand, ministers, members of Parliament and mayors are all subject to disclosure provisions.

Chief executives publish this information annually on their agency's website and link it to [www.data.govt.nz](http://www.data.govt.nz).

Disclosures containing information for the financial year (ending 30 June) are published by 31 July each year.

Further resources are provided below, including the Excel workbook to be used, a guide for agency staff, and DIA guidance for linking datasets. If you need any assistance, contact Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission at [ceexpenses@publicservice.govt.nz](mailto:ceexpenses@publicservice.govt.nz).

## Ngā kōnae e hāngai ana | Related files:

[Chief executive gifts, benefits and expenses model standards](#)

[Chief executive gifts benefits and expenses Disclosure Workbook](#)

[Chief executive gifts, benefits and expenses disclosures: A guide for agency staff](#)

Apply for a Data.govt.nz publisher account at [What is a publisher account and how do I apply?](#)



# Te kōhi pārongo me te whakapono ki te Kāwanatanga | Information gathering and public trust

Government agencies collect a wide range of information in order to carry out their responsibilities. This information falls into two main categories:

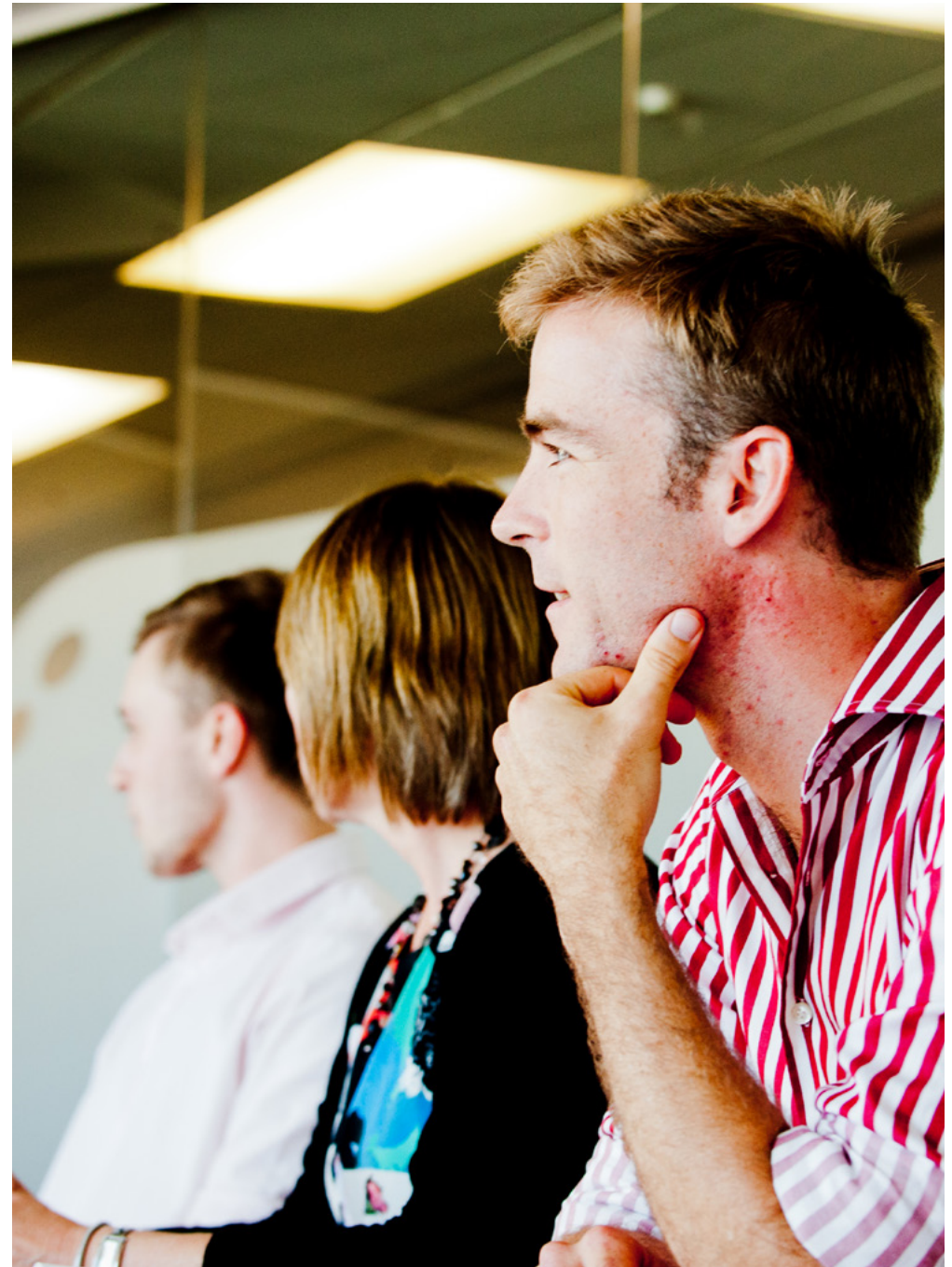
- Information necessary to deliver functions and services to the people in New Zealand and businesses
- Information needed to give effect to the responsibilities agencies have to protect people, information and places, to ensure regulatory compliance, and to detect and prevent crime.

These model standards provide a set of expectations for the second category of information. When agencies gather information for regulatory compliance and law enforcement purposes, they're exercising the powers of the State. It's important that agencies act in accordance with this authority, and in line with what the public generally expects and considers reasonable.

Agencies should use these model standards when establishing or reviewing their policies and practices in this area.

**Ngā kōnae e hāngai ana | Related files:**

[Information gathering and public trust model standards](#)



# He ārahitanga pōtitanga whānui | General election guidance

This guidance identifies common principles and obligations that will assist those working in the Public Service to understand their obligations and responsibilities during the lead-up to, and in the period immediately after a general election. The guidance is written in relation to the 2020 General Election, however the principles and obligations set out, particularly with political neutrality continue to be applicable, along with the Code of Conduct, outside of the election period.

## Ngā kōnae e hāngai ana | Related files:

[Cabinet Manual](#) – the authoritative guide to central government decision making for ministers, their offices, and those working within government.

### Please note:

The general election guidance was issued before the Public Service Act 2020 came into effect. As a result, it contains some language that reflects the previous State Services Act 1988. However, all guidance provided in the document remains applicable.

# Pāpāho pāpori | Social media

Social media can be an effective tool for agencies to communicate with people directly, to hear about what's important to them, and to promote discussion and seek input on policy issues.

Public servants are also free to use social media in their private lives, in the same way as other citizens. [The Standards of Integrity and Conduct](#), political neutrality obligations set out in the 2020 General Election Guidance and your agency policies apply to all media communications outside work as with other forms of communication.

### Please note:

The social media guidance was issued before the Public Service Act 2020 came into effect. As a result, it contains some language that reflects the previous State Services Act 1988. However, all guidance provided in the document remains applicable.



# He Aratohu Whakatairanga Pānui Kāwanatanga | Guidelines for Government Advertising

The Guidelines for Government Advertising were approved by Cabinet and issued on 20 November 1989 before being reissued in 2017.

The guidelines set out the principles agencies need to consider when planning for and utilising public funds for advertising and publicity purposes.

While the platforms organisations might use for advertising have changed since the guidelines were published, the principles that organisations need to consider remain the same.

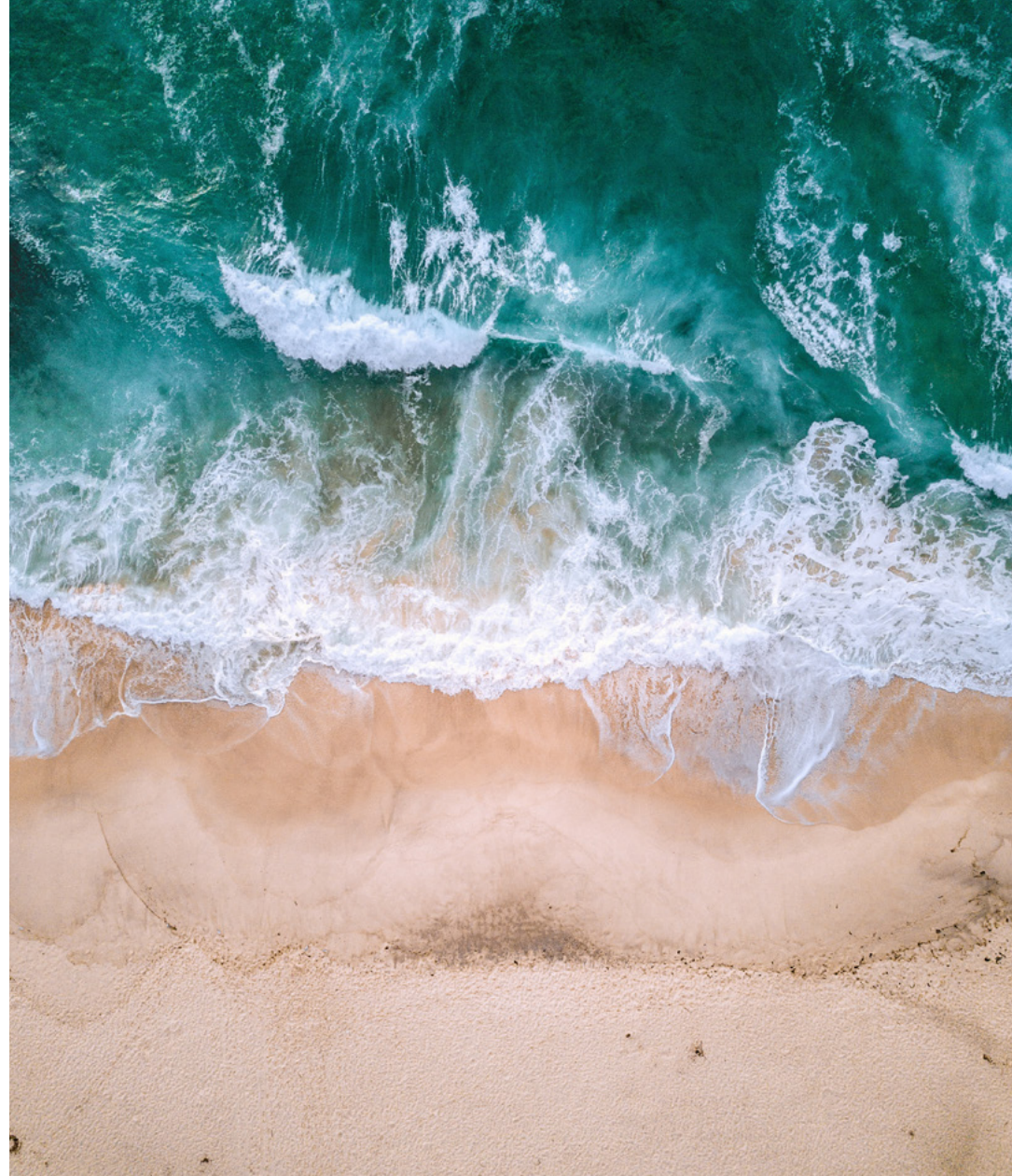




# Te āhua o te whakapau pūtea | Sensitive expenditure

Sensitive expenditure is any spending by an organisation that could be seen to be giving private benefit to a staff member, their family or friends. It risks harming an organisation's reputation and the public sector more generally if spending could lead to concerns that it's inappropriate or without a legitimate business reason. Issues concerning sensitive expenditure can arise regardless of how much money is spent. Even a small amount can raise concerns if it appears to be improper. All public servants need to ensure any expenditure decisions they're making can withstand both parliamentary and public scrutiny.

The Office of the Auditor-General provides guidance for making sensitive expenditure decisions. This guidance outlines the considerations and principles all public servants should have in mind when making expenditure decisions.





## Te utu whakapati me te whakakonuka | Bribery and corruption

The Serious Fraud Office is the lead law enforcement agency for investigating and prosecuting serious or complex financial crime, including bribery and corruption. The links below contain information on the SFO's role and how to make a complaint. Additionally, the Ministry of Justice provides examples for any agencies looking for help to create fraud and corruption policies.

### Ngā kōnae e hāngai ana | Related files:

[Report a fraud](#) – Serious Fraud Office

[Ministry of Justice: Create a fraud and corruption policy](#)

[Ministry of Justice: Example of a fraud and corruption policy](#)

### Please note:

The free and frank advice and policy stewardship guidance was issued before the Public Service Act 2020 came into effect. As a result, it contains some language that reflects the previous State Services Act 1988. All guidance provided in the document remains applicable.

## He kōrero hāngai me te tautiakitanga kaupapa here | Free and frank advice and policy stewardship

The provision of free and frank advice is central to our system of government. Free and frank advice demonstrates and upholds the impartiality that is fundamental to maintaining a politically neutral Public Service. Having the capacity and capability to provide this underpins the integrity, legitimacy, and performance of our system of government.

Good policy decisions, informed by free and frank advice, optimise services and results for the people in New Zealand, including future generations. Investing appropriately in policy stewardship means we're well placed to provide free and frank advice to future Governments.

This guidance sets out expectations that Public Service chief executives provide free and frank advice to ministers, engage in effective policy stewardship, and ensure that their agencies understand this. Agencies in the broader Public Service may also find this guidance a useful reference for good practice.

### Ngā kōnae e hāngai ana | Related files:

[Free and frank advice and policy stewardship](#)

[Free and frank advice and policy stewardship FAQ](#)

# Ngā āpiha me ngā komiti whiriwhiri | Officials and select committees

The officials and select committees guidelines apply to all public servants and employees within the public sector.

Select committees play an important role in New Zealand's democracy. They enable members of Parliament to carry out a broad range of work on behalf of the House of Representatives. To fulfil their function, select committees have considerable powers to summon witnesses and require the production of information.

This guidance sets out the expectations for public servants' attendance and conduct when appearing before select committees.

**Ngā kōnae e hāngai ana | Related files:**

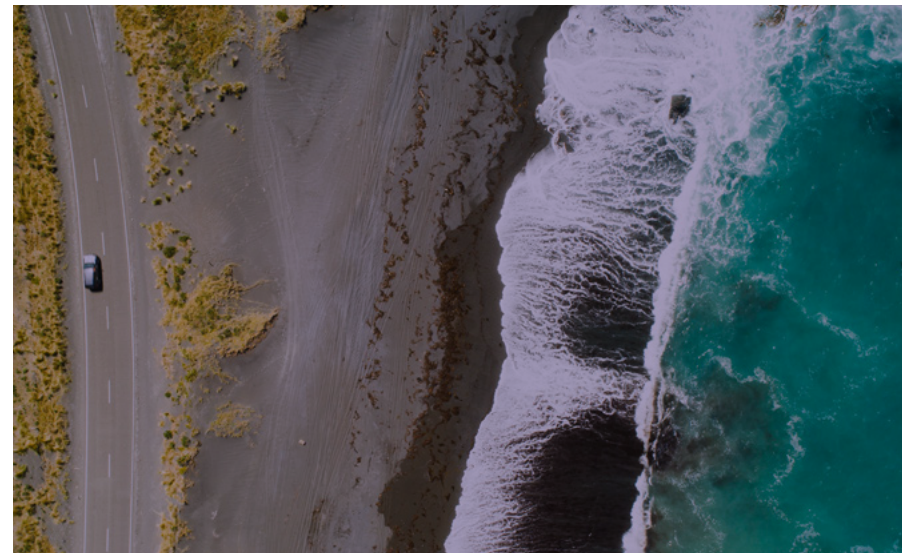
[Officials and select committees guidance](#)

## **Please note:**

The officials and select committees guidance was issued before the Public Service Act 2020 came into effect. As a result, it contains some language that reflects the previous State Services Act 1988. All guidance provided in the document remains applicable.







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