

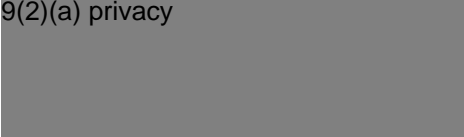


Te Kawa Mataaho

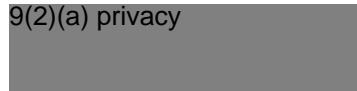
Public Service Commission

15 March 2023

9(2)(a) privacy



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Official Information Request

Our Ref: OIA 2023-0028

I refer to your official information request received on 16 February 2023 for:

“The Public Service is meant to be a secular organisation:

Please provide me with information as to what action has been taken by the Commission to ensure the Service remains a secular one.

Why is the Commission permitting its departments to require public servants to say prayers and similar before meetings, training courses etc? Please advise.

If the Commission is maintaining that the Public Service is no longer a secular one, please advise when that change occurred.

The above three requests lend themselves to objective responses from the Commission.”

Our response

In response to your specific question, the Commission has not taken any specific action to ensure the Public Service remains a secular one, we are therefore refusing your request under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act 1982 on the grounds that the information requested does not exist.

We have interpreted your question to include aspects of cultural acknowledgment or tikanga such as karakia at the commencement of meetings.

The Public Service is committed to building and maintaining capability within organisations to engage with Māori and understand Māori perspectives.

The Public Service Act 2020 (the Act) section 14 recognises the role of the Public Service to support the Crown in its relationships with Māori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi | the Treaty of Waitangi. To this end, the new Act includes provisions that put explicit responsibilities on the Public Service Commissioner, when developing and implementing the public service leadership strategy, to recognise the aims, aspirations and employment requirements of Māori, and the need for greater involvement of Māori in the Public Service.

The Public Service Act 2020 also places responsibilities on Public Service leaders to develop and maintain the capability of the Public Service to engage with Māori and to understand Māori perspectives.

To support the public service to meet these commitments, Te Arawhiti developed and led the implementation of Whāinga Amorangi: Transforming Leadership, supported by Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission (the Commission), Te Puni Kōkiri and Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori.

The Whāinga Amorangi framework has helped all Public Service agencies develop plans to build their individual and organisational capability to engage with iwi Māori, focusing on te reo Māori, the history of Aotearoa New Zealand and the Treaty of Waitangi.

The recognition of these responsibilities in the Public Service Act 2020 also aligns with the government's commitments under [Maihi Karauna](#) which is the Crown's Māori Language Strategy that addresses the revitalisation of te reo Māori and sets a vision for the future of te reo Māori.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact Ministerial.Services@publicservice.govt.nz.

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

Please note that we intend to publish this letter (with your personal details removed) on the Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission's website.

Yours sincerely



Nicky Dirks

Manager – Ministerial and Executive Services
Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission