



Te Kawa Mataaho

Public Service Commission

9 September 2024

9(2)(a) privacy

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Official Information Request

Our Ref: OIA 2024-0205

I refer to your official information request received on 6 August 2024 where you have asked for:

“Any communications including emails, reports, aide memoires, sms, whatsapp, etc, from 1 July 2024 onwards that mention karakia and/or relate to the use of karakia, between the Public Services Commission, it’s officers and employees and any Ministers, Ministers offices, MPs and any other Government agencies and departments.

Please include any communications internal to the Public Service Commission related to karakia and/or the use of karakia.”

Information being released

Please find enclosed and listed in the table below communications between the Public Service Commission and the office of the Minister for the Public Service relating to the use of karakia.

We have not included internal communications within the Commission that were sent to identify the relevant teams to provide the requested advice or documents where the word “karakia” is mentioned and the karakia wording is provided (such as meeting agendas).

| Item | Date | Document Description | Decision |
|------|------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | 22 July 2024 @10.01am | EMAIL titled: Karakia | Released in part |
| 2 | 22 July 2024 @ 11.42am | EMAIL titled: RE: Karakia | Released in part |

I have decided to release the documents listed above, subject to information being withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the OIA.

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) and enclosed documents 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**

From: [Gabrielle Wilson](#)
To: [Christina Connolly](#); [Ministerial Services](#); [Nicky Dirks](#)
Cc: [Alex Chadwick](#); [Hannah Cameron](#)
Subject: RE: Karakia
Date: Monday, 22 July 2024 11:42:05 am

Hi Christina,

Te Arawhiti - Office for Māori-Crown Relations is the agency responsible for supporting the public service to build capability to better meet its Treaty responsibilities. Te Arawhiti maintains relevant resources and expertise in this area, and advice should be sought from Te Arawhiti on the nature of karakia, their use in the public service, and existing guidance to agencies. You may wish to discuss this with the Minister for Māori-Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti.

No formal standards or expectations have been issued to agencies regarding use of karakia, and therefore how they are incorporated into an agency's operation is at the discretion of individual chief executives. There is no data on the use of karakia in the public service. However it is common for agencies to make karakia available to staff and encourage their use (e.g. to open and close meetings) as a means of building cultural capability and incorporating te reo and tikanga into their work.

We note that if the Government is considering expectations in this area, advice should be sought on how those expectations would fit with the Crown's statutory and Treaty obligations.

The Human Rights Commission has previously issued guidance on religious diversity in New Zealand work places. This states that karakia should not be compulsory, and employers should be aware that for some employees karakia and waiata at work can raise religious concerns, and that opportunities to discuss this are needed.
[HRC Religious-DiversityV6.pdf \(hrc-nz-resources.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com\)](#)

Let me know if this is sufficient or you would like to discuss further.

Thanks,
Gabs

From: Christina Connolly <9(2)(a) privacy >
Sent: Monday, July 22, 2024 10:01 AM
To: Gabrielle Wilson <9(2)(a) privacy >; Alex Chadwick <9(2)(a) privacy >; Ministerial Services <Ministerial.services@publicservice.govt.nz>; Nicky Dirks <9(2)(a) privacy >
Subject: Karakia

This email was sent from someone outside of Te Kawa Mataaho. Please take extra care.

Hi there,

There a wee storm brewing online about the use of Karakia in the Public Service. The Minister would like an urgent update on:

- Is Karakia considered a religious or semi religious practice?
- How widespread is the use of Karakia in the Public Service?
- Do we have any guidance on this?
- If we wanted to, could we issue a directive that Karakia is not compulsory in the public service, based on the premise public servants cannot be required to participate in religious or spiritual practice.

Deadline: 12 noon

Thanks

C

Christina Connolly | Private Secretary, Public Service | Office of Hon Nicola Willis

Minister of Finance | Minister for the Public Service | Minister for Social Investment

Associate Minister of Climate Change

Private Bag 18 888 | Parliament Buildings | Wellington 6011 www.beehive.govt.nz
