



## Publishing Information Release Schedule

<b>Date:</b>	29 June 2023		
<b>To:</b>	Hon Andrew Little, Minister for the Public Service		
<b>Action Sought:</b>	For Noting	<b>Due Date</b>	
<b>Report No:</b>	2023-0192		
<b>Contact:</b>	Josh Masson Chief Data Officer <sup>9(2)(a) privacy</sup>		
<b>Encl:</b>	No	<b>Priority:</b>	Low
<b>Security Level:</b>	UNCLASSIFIED		

## Executive Summary

1. Te Kawa Mataaho | Public Service Commission has a leadership role in collecting and publishing data on the New Zealand Public Services. Over time the Commission has improved the quality and breadth of data available to the public. Transparency of this information is an important contribution to the public understanding of the operation of the Public Service.
2. Given the public interest in this information, we have been looking to standardise our reporting timeline to provide greater certainty for agencies and the public and improve how we manage use of data for OIA and parliamentary processes.
3. To achieve this the Commission is looking to publish a rolling six monthly schedule of information releases, similar to the practice at Stats NZ. This approach will manage any perceptions of political bias in timing of release of this information, however it will also reduce flexibility in changing the release dates. This schedule is attached at Appendix one and is based on our practice to date.
4. We have also examined the dates of our full annual workforce data release in relation to the timing of this year's General Election. In previous election years, workforce data has been released in November/December. Recent improvements enabled us to bring this timing forward slightly in 2022 to mid-October. We consider that it is appropriate to wait two-three weeks after the General Election to release this year's data, so are planning our release for 2 November.
5. We also note that our release of quarterly data in May means that there is greater transparency of this information than in the past.

## Recommended Action

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We recommend that you:

- a **note** that a rolling six monthly schedule of information releases will be published on the Commissions website.

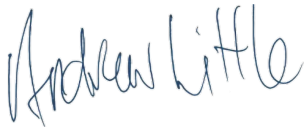
*Noted.* ✓

- b **note** that this year's annual workforce data (including contractor and consultant data) will be released in the first week of November.

*Noted.* ✓

- c **agree** that Te Kawa Mataaho release this briefing in full once it has been considered by you.

**Agree** / *disagree.*



Hon Andrew Little

**Minister for the Public Service**

9/7/23

## **Publishing Information Release Schedule**

### **Purpose of Report**

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1. The purpose of this paper is to outline how Te Kawa Mataaho | Public Service Commission (the Commission) intends to manage the proactive release of information by introducing and publishing a standard information release schedule.

### **Analysis**

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2. The Commission has a leadership role in collecting and publishing data on the New Zealand Public Services. This includes information on the public service workforce, OIA response rates and trust and confidence in the public service.
3. Transparency of this information is an important contribution to the public understanding of the operation of the Public Service.
4. There is increasing demand for such information, particularly in relation to our core functions around Senior leaders, Workforce, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Trust and Integrity. To meet this demand the Commission has improved the quality and breadth of data available to the public. This includes:
  - a. Collecting new information for public release e.g. contractors and consultants and OIA compliance;
  - b. Increasing frequency of the release of high-level workforce data in relation to the size of the public service; and
  - c. Improving the accessibility of this information through a website refresh and improved presentation of this information.
5. Currently, the absence of a clear calendar of outputs – both content and dates – makes it difficult for stakeholders to know what will be released, when it will be released and the timeframe the data relates to. Combined with increased demand, this results in the Commission and agencies across the Public Service receiving multiple duplicate requests for data through OIA and Parliamentary processes, when data may or may not be ready for release at the expected quality.
6. The publication of a release calendar – with dates for all significant data releases – is expected to address these concerns, enabling the Commission and agencies to effectively plan the provision and collection of data whilst advising the public of when to expect the information.
7. Adopting a similar approach to Stats NZ, we intend to release a rolling six monthly schedule of information releases. This approach will also manage any perceptions of political bias in timing of release of this information, however it will also reduce flexibility in changing the release dates.
8. The first six-month schedule is attached as Appendix One.

## Risks

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9. If there are inconsistencies in the release dates of information, we could create a perception that we are withholding information due to political sensitivity. There can be an expectation that we have all information on all public servants to hand. The reality is that the process is complex and typically involves agencies collating their own data and providing this to the Commission for validation and quality checks (often an iterative process). The Commission then analyses the content, preparing commentary and visualisations to explain the data effectively to the audience. These processes take time but are an essential part of our ability to produce high quality and reliable sources of information about the performance of the Public Service.
10. The release schedule will help manage any perception of political interference. In addition, the schedule builds in standardised timeframes for the release of information for a particular reference period. In principle all regular *quarterly* or *6-monthly* data collections should be released within two and a half months of the reference period, while regular *annual* data collections (particularly Workforce data) should be released within three and a half months of the reference period. There may be exceptions to this, for example when relying on external processes such as Statistics NZ information releases, or the completion of audit. Where practical we will also standardise the release day and time to 10 am on a Thursday.
11. We are particularly focused on ensuring that data is released in line with our political neutrality principles in a General Election year. There are data releases that will occur over September/October in line with our regular schedule and practice to date. This includes OIA compliance statistics which have been released every 6 months for the last five years. The calendar and the general adherence to the above principles will enhance certainty about these processes and reduce the risk that we are seen to be working around political considerations.
12. The release of data on the size of the public service, including contractor and consultant information, probably carries the most public interest of all our data releases. In the past 6 years we have released our annual information in late November/early December, including the 2017 and 2020 election years. Improvements in our processes enabled our annual workforce data release to occur on 20 October last year. Given the timing of this year's General Election on 14 October, and the public interest in this information, options have been considered to accelerate release of this data. However, a release before 14 October would not enable full analysis to occur, and financial information, which underpins contractor and consultant information, is not audited until the end of September.
13. We are also conscious of the period of transition that can follow immediately after the election. We consider that it is appropriate to have a brief pause in releases for two-three weeks immediately after an election, when the government may still be forming. Taking this pause into account, we will look to release this year's workforce data on 2 November.
14. We note that additional information is available in the public interest than in previous years, the March quarterly release on size of the public service, released on 24 May 2023, including a forecast for the full year in relation to contractor and consultant use. Our briefing to you describing this quarterly data, including our forecasts for the year end, is also due to be proactively released in July.

## **Next Steps**

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15. We will be publishing the calendar on our website, and will update quarterly to provide a forward rolling six monthly schedule.
16. It is proposed that this briefing is proactively released as soon as practicable.

**Appendix 1: Public Service Data Releases for the 6 months from 1 July -30 December 2023**

July	Communication staff numbers – update for 31 March – by 13 July
	Kiwis Count Trust survey – June quarter results of trust in the public service survey– by Monday 31 July
August	Labour Cost Index – June quarter wage movements of public sector – by Tuesday 15 Aug
September	OIA statistics – 6-months to June response rates and compliance with the OIA – by Thursday 14 Sept
	Remuneration disclosure for all CEs Crown Entity and Public Service Department – six monthly update and full 2022/23 analysis – by Thursday 2 Nov
October	Public Service Leaders Group (Leadership Dashboard) – quarterly as at August composition of the PSLG and activity of the Development Board – by Thursday 2 Nov
	Kiwis Count Trust survey – September quarter results of trust in the public service– by Tuesday 31 Oct
November	Workforce data – annual release of key workforce metrics and analysis, including contractor and consultant expenditure as at 30 June 2023 – by Thursday 2 Nov
	Labour Cost Index – September quarter wage movements of public sector – by Wednesday 15 Nov
December	Workforce data – September quarter release of high-level data on number of FTE and spending on contractors and consultants – by Thursday 14 Dec
	Communication staff numbers – Sep quarter – by Thursday 14 Dec