



Assurance Review of the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's Our Future Services Programme

Background

- 1 The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) is delivering the Our Future Services (OFS) programme, a flagship seven-year transformation intended to modernise Immigration New Zealand's systems and services, improve risk management, and enhance customer and staff experience. The programme was approved by Cabinet in 2024–25 following a Gateway review and Detailed Business Case. MBIE is delivering the programme in three phases. Phase one is nearly complete, and phase two has not yet started.
- 2 The OFS programme assumes the availability of effective biometric capability within Immigration New Zealand's systems. This capability was to be progressed through MBIE's Biometric Capability Update (BCU), a separate project that was initiated in 2018 and discontinued at the end of 2025. An independent review of the BCU project, commissioned by MBIE, identified significant concerns relating to the original business case, governance, contract management, risk management, delivery and ministerial reporting of the BCU project.
- 3 Following a request from the Minister for Immigration, the Public Service Commissioner initiated an inquiry into the integrity of MBIE's conduct in relation to the BCU project. The Minister also requested that the Public Service Commission undertake an in-depth review of the OFS programme, given the importance of that programme and its relationship to the BCU project.
- 4 The Public Service Commissioner has decided that an independent assurance review of the OFS programme should be undertaken. The review will focus mainly on how the programme was set up and how phase one has been delivered.

Purpose

- 5 The purpose of this review is to provide independent assurance to the Public Service Commissioner, and to inform Ministers and the public, that there is a sound basis for confidence in the future delivery of the OFS programme.
- 6 The review responds to concerns arising from the related BCU project and is intended to provide assurance that lessons are being identified and addressed, and that the governance, delivery, and reporting of the OFS programme can be relied upon to support informed decision-making.
- 7 This assurance is important given the scale, complexity, and strategic significance of the OFS programme as a major public investment and a central component of New Zealand's immigration system.

Scope

- 8 The Reviewer will examine, make findings, and report on whether the OFS programme is being governed, managed, reported on, and delivered in a manner that provides a sound basis for confidence, and may make recommendations where appropriate. This will include consideration of:
 - the original design of the business case and the programme, whether they aligned with senior stakeholder expectations, were based on sound assumptions and whether they were well designed to deliver their intended outcomes and benefits;
 - whether there is a credible basis for confidence in the programme's delivery, including its management of scope, cost, schedule, contractors, key risks, capability and resourcing;
 - whether governance and decision-making arrangements are appropriate and effective, including the quality of information, commercial management, documentation, and escalation of risks and issues;
 - the quality, completeness, and timeliness of advice and reporting provided to Ministers, including whether it accurately reflects programme status, risks, and dependencies;
 - the effectiveness of risk management, assurance, and oversight processes, including the use of independent assurance;
 - how well the programme has been embedded into MBIE's business, including change management and implementation processes;
 - whether lessons from the Biometric Capability Update (BCU) project have been identified and are being addressed, including in relation to governance, delivery, reporting, commercial contracts and management of dependencies;
 - the impact of the non-delivery of the BCU project on anticipated benefits of OFS;
 - any other matters reasonably necessary to provide a complete assessment of the OFS programme.
- 9 In undertaking this review, the Reviewer must have regard to relevant public sector standards, guidance, and expectations, including the Cabinet Manual, Treasury investment management guidance, and applicable MBIE frameworks.

Out of scope

- 10 The Reviewer will not:
 - 11 determine disciplinary, civil, or criminal liability of any individual;
 - 12 examine matters unrelated to the OFS programme or broader programme assurance.

Related investigations, reviews and inquiries

- 13 This review is complementary to the Public Service Commission's Inquiry into MBIE's conduct in relation to the BCU project. To the extent possible, it will not replicate or duplicate the work of that Inquiry or make any findings within the Inquiry's scope. The Reviewer may discuss this review with the Inquirer and, if available, take into account the Inquiry report.
- 14 The Reviewer may also consider the report of the independent review that MBIE commissioned into the BCU project and interview the author, but for context only. Similarly, the Reviewer may consider any available internal assurance reports generated by MBIE, following the

independent review. This will include MBIE's urgent stocktake of all technology projects and its work to assess and strengthen its major investment project systems and processes. However, all findings for this assurance review must be made by the Reviewer using their own independent judgment based on the underlying evidence.

Process

15 The Reviewer will undertake the review in a manner they consider appropriate to meet the purpose of these Terms of Reference.

16 In undertaking the review, the Reviewer is expected to:

- request and consider relevant documentation, including business cases, contracts, governance and programme reporting, assurance reports, and advice provided to Ministers;
- interview current and former MBIE staff, contractors, and other relevant stakeholders;
- consider relevant independent assurance activity, including Gateway reviews and Independent Quality Assurance;
- triangulate information from multiple sources to form an evidence-based view of programme performance; and
- engage with central agencies and other relevant parties where appropriate.

17 The Reviewer will be supported by a consultancy firm, who will provide technical assurance expertise and support evidence gathering and analysis. The Reviewer will remain responsible for the findings, any recommendations, and the final report. The consultancy firm will act under the direction of the Reviewer throughout.

18 The Reviewer will ensure that their process is fair and appropriate, including providing a draft report to the Secretary for Economic Growth and the Public Service Commissioner for comment prior to finalising the report. In the event that the draft report includes adverse comments about individuals or organisations/agencies, the Reviewer will meet any natural justice obligations.

The Public Service Commissioner's functions and powers

19 The Review relates to the Commissioner's general function to act as the employer of public service chief executives, including by reviewing the performance of agencies that the chief executive leads or carries out some functions within (under section 44(d)(ii) of the Act), and is conducted using the Commissioner's investigatory powers as set out in Schedule 3 of the Act.

Appointment and delegation

20 The Public Service Commissioner appoints Mr David Hosking to undertake this Review.

21 Under Schedule 3, clause 6 of the Public Service Act 2020, and for the purposes of this Review, the Public Service Commissioner delegates his functions and powers under Schedule 3, clauses 2 to 4 and 11 of the Public Service Act to the Reviewer, with effect from the date of the appointment of the Reviewer.

Deliverables, timeframe and reporting

- 22 The Reviewer will commence the review as soon as practicable following their appointment.
- 23 The Reviewer will deliver a report to the Public Service Commissioner setting out their findings and any recommendations.
- 24 The Reviewer will report as soon as practicable, or by such date as agreed with the Public Service Commissioner.
- 25 It is intended that the final report will be made publicly available, subject to any legal and confidentiality considerations.



Sir Brian Roche KNZM
Public Service Commissioner | Head of Service
Te Tumu Whakarae mō Te Kawa Mataaho

18 August 2026