Te Kawa Mataaho
Public Service Commission

18 February 2025

Debbie Power
Secretary for Social Development and Chief Executive
Ministry of Social Development

By email: 9(2)(a) - Privacy

Tēnā koe Debbie

Inquiry into the protection of personal information

In June 2024, following a direction from the Prime Minister and the Minister for the Public Service, Acting Public Service Commissioner Heather Baggott appointed Pania Gray and Michael Heron KC to conduct an Inquiry into allegations that personal information provided to government agencies as part of Census 2023, or for Covid-19 vaccination purposes, had been misused by third-party service providers during the 2023 general election.

Under the terms of reference, the inquiry was to establish the facts and provide an independent assessment of government agency activity in relation to the allegations.

You have received an embargoed copy of the final report. Please keep this matter strictly confidential until public release.

I would like to thank you for the support that you, your senior leaders and staff gave the inquiry leads during this process. I also acknowledge your agency's co-operation in providing the inquiry leads with access to all relevant documents and Ministry of Social Development (MSD) staff to complete the inquiry.

The findings and my expectations

I was pleased to see from the inquiry findings that MSD acted appropriately and with the urgency required when handling a protected disclosure raised in writing in May 2024. However, I note the inquirers have said that it was difficult to conclude whether or not the MSD whistleblower did report their allegations to their MSD managers prior to May 2024. It would be helpful to understand this further.

Next Steps

I would appreciate you discussing the above with your Assistant Commissioner Josh Blackmore and keeping him informed of any actions to address the above. Josh is also available to answer any questions you may have about the content of this letter.

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I will release the inquiry's final report today. When I do, I will write to Public Service chief executives, as this is a timely opportunity for every Public Service agency to ensure that they have robust policies and practices in place to address the issues highlighted by the report.

I would appreciate you giving your personal attention to the matters set out in that letter.

Nāku noa, nā

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