

2 March 2022

s9(2)(a)



On 15 November 2021, Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities received the following Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) requests from you:

1. *All internal communications between Kāinga Ora officials/employees regarding the recent revelations contained in this article:*

<https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/politics/2021/11/kainga-ora-hid-the-fact-it-was-using-labour-candidate-arena-williams-in-taxpayer-funded-advertising.html>

2. *All internal communications between Kāinga Ora officials/employees regarding the recent announcement of a Public Service Commission investigation into concerning events at Kāinga Ora. This should include all correspondence between Kāinga Ora and the Public Service Commission/Commissioner, and between Kāinga Ora and the Minister of Housing's office in regards to this investigation.*
3. *Please detail the advice provided to Kāinga Ora's communications staff prior to the 2020 election detailing their responsibilities regarding political neutrality. If specific training sessions were held please detail the dates they were held, how many attended, whether it was compulsory or not, and provide any materials that were provided as part of the training.*

*If any advice was provided via group email, please provide this correspondence.*

4. *The all staff email sent on 13 November 2021 regarding Kāinga Ora Officials' obligations under the Public Service Code of Conduct, specifically to act as neutral public servants. Any other all staff communications circulated in the week prior to the date above, regarding the same subject.*

On 24 December 2021, I wrote to you, advising that your first two requests were declined under section 18(f) of the OIA as this information cannot be provided without substantial collation and research. However, I explained that we had identified key communications between senior people that fall within scope of your requests, which we would collate and provide to you.

There were 29 emails within the scope of your request. Please find attached 27 of these emails / email trails.

The following information within these emails has been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the OIA to protect the privacy of individuals:

- Mobile phone numbers.
- The name of a staff member and names of external parties.
- Some personal comments.

Two emails have been withheld in full. One contains legal advice and is withheld under section 9(2)(h) to maintain legal professional privilege. The other email contains content that is largely out of scope but it also contains personal comments and is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the OIA.

Concerning your third request, please find attached:

- Your role in this year's General Election
- FAQs 2020 election – update
- Explanation of the Public Service standards
- Leaders Update – Election Guidance - excerpt

All Kāinga Ora employees, including our communications team, received guidance prior to the 2020 election and these items were published on the Kāinga Ora intranet.

Our people were also advised of the information provided by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, e.g. *The Cabinet Office Circular on Government Decisions and Actions in the Pre-election Period* and of the Public Service Commission Standards of Integrity and Conduct, to which links were provided in the pre-election period.

Concerning your fourth request, please find attached:

- Business Alert, 11 November 2021, titled '*Expressing a personal view*'.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rowan Macrae". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Rowan Macrae**  
**General Manager People, Governance and Capability**

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**From:** s(9)(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 2:26 PM  
**To:** Mark Fraser; Quentin Bright; s(9)(2)(a) Rachel Kelly; Graeme Mowday; Nick Maling; Don Badman  
**Cc:** Martyn Watterson  
**Subject:** RE: Draft statement re Hobsonville Point

If it puts this line of enquiry to bed, I'm ok. We've acknowledged it, did what we were supposed to do, no further action required, nothing more to see here.

Thanks

s(9)(2)(a)  
( )

**From:** Mark Fraser <Mark.Fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 2:23 PM  
**To:** Quentin Bright <Quentin.Bright@kaingaora.govt.nz> s(9)(2)(a)  
s(9)(2)(a) Rachel Kelly <rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Graeme Mowday <Graeme.Mowday@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Nick Maling <Nick.Maling@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Don Badman <Don.Badman@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Cc:** Martyn Watterson <Martyn.Watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** RE: Draft statement re Hobsonville Point

Quentin, I've re-read it, maybe I'm judging too harshly. I'll leave with you but I don't like the implication of apology from us when we did no wrong.

Regards,

Mark.



**Mark Fraser** (he/him)

General Manager  
Urban Development Delivery

Mobile: s(9)(2)(a)  
Email: [mark.fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:mark.fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz)

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Catalina Workshops, 3 Boundary Road, Hobsonville, Auckland 0616  
Kāinga Ora - Homes and Communities  
PO BOX 84143 Westgate Auckland 0657 | New Zealand Government | [www.kaingaora.govt.nz](http://www.kaingaora.govt.nz)

**From:** Mark Fraser

**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 2:07 PM

**To:** Quentin Bright <Quentin.Bright@kaingaora.govt.nz>; s(9)(2)(a)

s(9)(2)(a) Rachel Kelly <rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Graeme Mowday <Graeme.Mowday@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Nick Maling <Nick.Maling@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Don Badman <Don.Badman@kaingaora.govt.nz>

**Cc:** Martyn Watterson <Martyn.Watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz>

**Subject:** RE: Draft statement re Hobsonville Point

Quentin, I don't like the conclusion. It implies we did something wrong and we did not. There is no story here and to suggest that we made a judgement and now we're reminding everyone of it suggests we messed up. We did not. They are trying to find something that is not there and we should say so.

Regards,

Mark.



**Mark Fraser** (he/him)

General Manager  
Urban Development Delivery

Mobile: s(9)(2)(a)  
Email: [mark.fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:mark.fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz)

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**From:** Quentin Bright <Quentin.Bright@kaingaora.govt.nz>

**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 1:52 PM

**To:** s(9)(2)(a) s(9)(2)(a) Rachel Kelly <rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Graeme Mowday <Graeme.Mowday@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Nick Maling <Nick.Maling@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Don Badman <Don.Badman@kaingaora.govt.nz>

**Cc:** Martyn Watterson <Martyn.Watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Mark Fraser <Mark.Fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz>

**Subject:** Draft statement re Hobsonville Point

**Importance:** High

Hi all. Here's my proposed. I want to keep this very short and sweet.

Have also run it verbally past A Mac as I was writing it as I wanted to give him the heads-up that various people were involved but that we would be issuing a statement not providing an interviewee, particularly him. s(9)(2)(a)

s(9)(2)(a)

The material below acknowledges our processes and the fact that we have provided staff with a reminder to check re anything potentially politically sensitive. It states a firm timeline. For consistency it also uses a piece from our OIA response.

First, as protagonist/s are you happy with the content s9(2)(a) Any other comments also welcome but we are on a deadline as I want to get this back to Newhub/Discovery well in advance.

Ngā mihi

Q

*The story that ran on One Roof was very clearly about community work at Hobsonville Point. It featured a Hobsonville Point resident who was involved in the work. Kāinga Ora made this clear in its response to an OIA on the subject.*

*In the latter stages of the story being put together Kāinga Ora was made aware of the fact that one of the story's main interviewees was potentially going to be a political candidate. A Kāinga Ora staff member made a personal judgement call that as the story was about a Hobsonville Point community response to helping out Hobsonville Point residents this did not matter. The story clearly has no political reference or bias.*

*Kāinga Ora takes its responsibility regarding political neutrality seriously. The article was written and published prior to Arena William's candidacy being announced. However, as a result of this matter, to make sure Kāinga Ora maintains its neutral position as a government agency under the Public Service Code of Conduct, the relevant staff were reminded to check with senior management to ensure all the necessary steps are taken to fulfil those obligations.*



**Quentin Bright**

**Senior Media Advisor  
Corporate Communications and Media  
National Services**

Mobile: s9(2)(a)  
Email: [quentin.bright@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:quentin.bright@kaingaora.govt.nz)

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Released under the Official Information Act 1982

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**From:** Mark Fraser  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 1:11 PM  
**To:** s(9)(2)(a) Quentin Bright  
**Cc:** Iain Duncan  
**Subject:** RE: Newshub request re Hobsonville Point story and Labour candidate involvement.

Quentin, I would be happy to make myself available for an interview instead of Andrew. There is no story here but we shouldn't shy away from it, we have nothing to hide. So I'm happy to talk to it.

Regards,

Mark.



**Mark Fraser** (he/him)

General Manager  
Urban Development Delivery

Mobile: s(9)(2)(a)  
Email: [mark.fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:mark.fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz)

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**From:** s(9)(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 12:13 PM  
**To:** Mark Fraser <Mark.Fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Cc:** Iain Duncan <Iain.Duncan@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** FW: Newshub request re Hobsonville Point story and Labour candidate involvement.

Hi Mark,

The story I thought had gone away is back – I saw it pop up during our zoom call s(9)(2)(a)

s(9)(2)(a)

Out of scope

s(9)(2)(a)

**From:** Quentin Bright <[Quentin.Bright@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:Quentin.Bright@kaingaora.govt.nz)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 11:45 AM  
**To:** Media Notification <[Medianotification@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:Medianotification@kaingaora.govt.nz)>  
**Subject:** Newshub request re Hobsonville Point story and Labour candidate involvement.

Kia ora. Working on this one.

**From:** s9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 10:49 AM  
**To:** Media Enquiries <[MediaEnquiries@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:MediaEnquiries@kaingaora.govt.nz)>  
**Subject:** Newshub request

Some people who received this message don't often get email from s9(2)(a)@discovery.com. [Learn why this is important](#)  
Kia ora

This is a request for an interview with Andrew McKenzie about emails showing Kainga Ora was aware Arena Williams was planning to run as a Labour candidate when it used her for advertorial content and took steps not to disclose the fact.

This is for a story running on Newshub at 6pm tonight. My deadline for the interview is 4pm at the latest.

Thank you,  
s9(2)(a)

s9(2)(a) POLITICAL EDITOR | NEWSHUB | MOBILE s9(2)(a) s9(2)(a)

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*Kāinga Ora takes its responsibility regarding political neutrality seriously. The article was written and published prior to Arena William's candidacy being announced. However, as a result of this matter, to make sure Kāinga Ora maintains its neutral position as a government agency under the Public Service Code of Conduct, the relevant staff were reminded to check with senior management to ensure all the necessary steps are taken to fulfil those obligations.*



**Quentin Bright**

**Senior Media Advisor  
Corporate Communications and Media  
National Services**

Mobile: s9(2)(a)  
Email: [quentin.bright@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:quentin.bright@kaingaora.govt.nz)

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**From:** Quentin Bright  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 3:21 PM  
**To:** Media Notification; Media Responses  
**Subject:** FW: Newshub request re Hobsonville Point matter

Kia ora, the following will shortly be sent to Newshub/Discovery, its query below

s9(2)(a) please see the following statement in relation to your query – the same topic that was covered back in June by Newshub – and our response today is exactly the same as it was then. I respectfully ask that Newshub does not name the person or people in the email thread in its story. Thanks very much.

Ngā mihi  
Quentin

*Please attribute the statement to a Kāinga Ora spokesperson*

*The story that ran on One Roof was very clearly about community work at Hobsonville Point. It featured a Hobsonville Point resident who was involved in the work. Kāinga Ora made this clear in its response to an OIA from Newshub on the subject.*

*In the latter stages of the story being put together Kāinga Ora was made aware of the fact that one of the story's main interviewees was potentially going to be a political candidate. A Kāinga Ora staff member made a personal judgement call that as the story was about a Hobsonville Point community response to helping out Hobsonville Point residents this did not matter. The story clearly has no political reference or bias.*

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**Quentin Bright**

**Senior Media Advisor  
Corporate Communications and Media  
National Services**

Mobile: s9(2)(a)  
Email: [quentin.bright@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:quentin.bright@kaingaora.govt.nz)

**From:** s9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 2:27 PM  
**To:** Media Enquiries <MediaEnquiries@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** Re: Newshub request

Some people who received this message don't often get email from s9(2)(a) [Learn why this is important](#)  
Hi following up on this, thanks

On Wed, Nov 10, 2021 at 10:48 AM s9(2)(a) wrote:

Kia ora

This is a request for an interview with Andrew McKenzie about emails showing Kainga Ora was aware Arena Williams was planning to run as a Labour candidate when it used her for advertorial content and took steps not to disclose the fact.

This is for a story running on Newshub at 6pm tonight. My deadline for the interview is 4pm at the latest.

Thank you,

s9(2)(a)

s9(2)(a)

POLITICAL EDITOR | NEWSHUB | MOBILE

s9(2)(a)

s9(2)(a)

s9(2)(a)

POLITICAL EDITOR | NEWSHUB | MOBILE

s9(2)(a)

s9(2)(a)

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**From:** Quentin Bright  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 3:36 PM  
**To:** s(9)(2)(a) Graeme Mowday; Martyn Watterson; Rachel Kelly  
**Cc:** Andrew McKenzie; Don Badman; Mark Fraser; Nick Maling  
**Subject:** s(9)(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story

Tēnā koutou katoa. Just a heads-up that Minister Woods was door-stopped s(9)(2)(a) on her way into Parliament and asked about the matter. The Minister expressed her disappointment about the text in one email but stood the ground on the fact that story was not a matter of political bias.

Kāinga Ora has supplied largely the same lines as it did in response to Newshub back in June. All the steps that were taken with the compilation and publication of the story were correct; there was no political reference or bias in the story.

I have specifically s(9)(2)(a) not to mention any individual's name in the email thread. To be honest, I don't think she would have but it is now on record that we specifically asked for that. I'm 99.9999% she won't name you s(9)(2)(a). She might get shitty with my response and put my name as spokesperson. Lol. That's why I am paid the ginormous bucks. Actually, on that Andrew ... ☺

Ngā mihi

Q



**Quentin Bright**

**Senior Media Advisor  
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**From:** Rachel Kelly  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 9:45 AM  
**To:** Andrew McKenzie; Rowan Macrae; Nick Maling; Mark Fraser  
**Cc:** Martyn Watterson; Don Badman; Quentin Bright; Gabby Boag  
**Subject:** FW: Onerooft story - URGENT

**Importance:** High

FYI - following on from the story last night on newshub the MO has asked for the response to the following questions (likely in preparation for an oral question today), by 11am.

Most of this information we have to hand from previous oral questions relating to our advertising and marketing for OneRoof, but I will run the response to question 2 and 4 passed you before we respond. I have also been advised that the Minister may call Vui re this.

Thanks

Rach

**From:** David Durie <David.Durie@parliament.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 8:56 AM  
**To:** GRU Jobs <oiarequests@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Cc:** Donna Jennings <Donna.Jennings@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Gabby Boag <Gabby.Boag@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Don Badman <Don.Badman@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Rachel Kelly <rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Martyn Watterson <Martyn.Watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Quentin Bright <Quentin.Bright@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** Onerooft story - URGENT  
**Importance:** High

Hi Team,

**By 11am this morning** can I please have the following:

- How much did the article cost?
- What has happened as a result of the frank emails by the individual? Training, disciplinary etc
- Has there been any other articles since 2017 where Kāinga Ora have funded articles where there are any political ties? Including comments from anyone in parliament.
- What processes have been put in place by Kāinga Ora to prevent similar incidents from occurring again?
- Timeline of events (detailed) – when they were first in contact with Arena through to today.
- All media statements relating to this event

Happy to jump on a quick call in the next 10-15mins to ensure we're all aligned with the expected information?

Cheers,

**David Durie**

Private Secretary (Housing)

David.durie@parliament.govt.nz | 04 817 9782 | s(9)(2)(a)

Office of Hon Dr Megan Woods

Minister of Energy and Resources | Minister of Research, Science and Innovation | Minister of Housing |  
Associate Minister of Finance

Private Bag 18041 | Parliament Buildings | Wellington 6160 | New Zealand

Office Phone: +64 4 817 8705 Email: [m.woods@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:m.woods@ministers.govt.nz)

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**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 10:00 AM  
**To:** Rachel Kelly; Andrew McKenzie; Rowan Macrae; Nick Maling  
**Cc:** Martyn Watterson; Don Badman; Quentin Bright; Gabby Boag  
**Subject:** RE: Onerooft story - URGENT

Thank you Rachel. My key issues remains the deliberate reassembly of the timeline to imply political motive where there was none.

Regards,

Mark.



**Mark Fraser** (he/him)

General Manager  
Urban Development Delivery

Mobile: [REDACTED] s9(2)(a)  
Email: [mark.fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:mark.fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz)

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**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 8:56 AM

**To:** GRU Jobs <oiarequests@kaingaora.govt.nz>

**Cc:** Donna Jennings <Donna.Jennings@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Gabby Boag <Gabby.Boag@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Don Badman <Don.Badman@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Rachel Kelly <rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Martyn Watterson <Martyn.Watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Quentin Bright <Quentin.Bright@kaingaora.govt.nz>

**Subject:** Onerooof story - URGENT

**Importance:** High

Hi Team,

**By 11am this morning** can I please have the following:

- How much did the article cost?
- What has happened as a result of the frank emails by the individual? Training, disciplinary etc
- Has there been any other articles since 2017 where Kāinga Ora have funded articles where there are any political ties? Including comments from anyone in parliament.
- What processes have been put in place by Kāinga Ora to prevent similar incidents from occurring again?
- Timeline of events (detailed) – when they were first in contact with Arena through to today.
- All media statements relating to this event

Happy to jump on a quick call in the next 10-15mins to ensure we're all aligned with the expected information?

Cheers,

**David Durie**

Private Secretary (Housing)

David.durie@parliament.govt.nz | 04 817 9782 |

s9(2)(a)

**Office of Hon Dr Megan Woods**

**Minister of Energy and Resources | Minister of Research, Science and Innovation | Minister of Housing | Associate Minister of Finance**

Private Bag 18041 | Parliament Buildings | Wellington 6160 | New Zealand

Office Phone: +64 4 817 8705 Email: [m.woods@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:m.woods@ministers.govt.nz)

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---

**From:** Mark Fraser  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 10:46 AM  
**To:** Andrew McKenzie  
**Subject:** Re: s9(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story

s9(2)(a)

Regards,

Mark.



**Mark Fraser** (he/him)

General Manager  
Urban Development Delivery

Mobile: s9(2)(a)  
Email: [mark.fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:mark.fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz)

---

Catalina Workshops, 3 Boundary Road, Hobsonville, Auckland 0616  
Kāinga Ora - Homes and Communities  
PO BOX 84143 Westgate Auckland 0657 | New Zealand Government | [www.kaingaora.govt.nz](http://www.kaingaora.govt.nz)

**From:** Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 9:54 AM  
**To:** s9(2)(a)  
**Cc:** Graeme Mowday <Graeme.Mowday@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Mark Fraser <Mark.Fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** Re: s9(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story

Hi s9(2)(a)

Just checking in to make sure you are OK today - I hope Ted Lasso was good! As I am sure you will have been told, the judgement call you made was fine, and I am happy to stand behind you on it. This little maelstrom will pass quickly, I just hope it doesn't make you too risk averse! If you are feeling a bit off at all, please reach out for support.

Take care  
Andrew McKenzie

**From:** s9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 10, 2021 3:48 PM  
**To:** Quentin Bright; Graeme Mowday; Martyn Watterson; Rachel Kelly  
**Cc:** Andrew McKenzie; Don Badman; Mark Fraser; Nick Maling  
**Subject:** RE: s9(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story

Thanks mate.

s9(2)(a)

s9(2)(a)

**From:** Quentin Bright <Quentin.Bright@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 3:36 PM  
**To:** s9(2)(a) Graeme Mowday  
<Graeme.Mowday@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Martyn Watterson <Martyn.Watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Rachel Kelly  
<rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Cc:** Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Don Badman <Don.Badman@kaingaora.govt.nz>;  
Mark Fraser <Mark.Fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Nick Maling <Nick.Maling@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** s9(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story

Tēnā koutou katoa. Just a heads-up that Minister Woods was door-stopped s9(2)(a) on her way into Parliament and asked about the matter. The Minister expressed her disappointment about the text in one email but stood the ground on the fact that story was not a matter of political bias.

Kāinga Ora has supplied largely the same lines as it did in response to Newshub back in June. All the steps that were taken with the compilation and publication of the story were correct; there was no political reference or bias in the story.

I have specifically s9(2)(a) not to mention any individual's name in the email thread. To be honest, I don't think she would have but it is now on record that we specifically asked for that. I'm 99.9999% she won't name s9(2)(a). She might get shitty with my response and put my name as spokesperson. Lol. That's why I am paid the ginormous bucks. Actually, on that Andrew ... 😊

Ngā mihi

Q



Quentin Bright

**Senior Media Advisor  
Corporate Communications and Media  
National Services**

Mobile: s9(2)(a)

Email: [quentin.bright@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:quentin.bright@kaingaora.govt.nz)

---

Freephone: 0800 801 601 | Mainline: (04) 439 3000 | Kāinga Ora - Homes and Communities  
PO BOX 0000 Wellington 6140 | New Zealand Government | [www.kaingaora.govt.nz](http://www.kaingaora.govt.nz)

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---

**From:** s9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 10:50 AM  
**To:** Andrew McKenzie  
**Cc:** Graeme Mowday; Mark Fraser  
**Subject:** RE: s9(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story 4

s9(2)(a)



**From:** Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 9:54 AM  
**To:** s9(2)(a)  
**Cc:** Graeme Mowday <Graeme.Mowday@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Mark Fraser <Mark.Fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** Re: s9(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story

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Take care

Andrew McKenzie

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**Sent:** Wednesday, November 10, 2021 3:48 PM  
**To:** Quentin Bright; Graeme Mowday; Martyn Watterson; Rachel Kelly  
**Cc:** Andrew McKenzie; Don Badman; Mark Fraser; Nick Maling  
**Subject:** RE: s9(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story

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s9(2)(a)



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**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 3:36 PM

**To:** s9(2)(a) Graeme Mowday  
<Graeme.Mowday@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Martyn Watterson <Martyn.Watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Rachel Kelly <rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz>

**Cc:** Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Don Badman <Don.Badman@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Mark Fraser <Mark.Fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Nick Maling <Nick.Maling@kaingaora.govt.nz>

**Subject:** s9(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story

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Ngā mihi

Q



**Quentin Bright**

**Senior Media Advisor  
Corporate Communications and Media  
National Services**

Mobile: s9(2)(a)  
Email: [quentin.bright@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:quentin.bright@kaingaora.govt.nz)

---

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PO BOX 0000 Wellington 6140 | New Zealand Government | [www.kaingaora.govt.nz](http://www.kaingaora.govt.nz)

---

**From:** Marie Winfield  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 11:19 AM  
**To:** Nick Maling  
**Subject:** Link to NewsHub item if you haven't seen it

[Kāinga Ora hid the fact it was using Labour candidate Arena Williams in taxpayer-funded advertising | Newshub](#)

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---

**From:** Marie Winfield  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 12:53 PM  
**To:** Nick Maling  
**Subject:** FW: Nicola Willis - Kāinga Ora: The Labour Party candidate, the taxpayer-paid ad, and the cover-up

Hi – keen for your views on this draft. Martyn and I decided to leave out the bit you and I last spoke about. I'm checking Martyn's views on the HLC mention.

Marie

**From:** Martyn Watterson <Martyn.Watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 12:41 PM  
**To:** Marie Winfield <Marie.Winfield@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** FW: Nicola Willis - Kāinga Ora: The Labour Party candidate, the taxpayer-paid ad, and the cover-up  
**Importance:** High

1<sup>st</sup> draft. The third para contains some detail, but I think we should show what was done as result. Thoughts?

To be attributed to (A McK or Nick?)

*Kāinga Ora takes its responsibility regarding political neutrality seriously. Our employees are made aware of their responsibility to be politically impartial when they start with us and are reminded of these obligations from time to time as appropriate.*

*While the article in question was politically neutral, one of our people, employed at the time by HLC, made a personal judgement call that the story was about a Hobsonville Point community response and was being published prior to Arena William's candidacy being announced. We acknowledge there are aspects of this that could have been handled better, and as Kāinga Ora takes its responsibilities around political neutrality very seriously, the employees involved were reminded about their obligations under the Public Service Code of Conduct.*

*The was done via an in person meeting with the employees concerned. In addition targeted training was given to this team in person by the Government Relations Manager and information on the Public Service Act was updated to staff in September 2020.*

*Everyone involved, and Kāinga Ora has learnt from this. Kāinga Ora is confident that our employees uphold the Public Service Commission's standards of integrity and conduct and that we maintain political neutrality.*

**From:** s9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 9:04 PM  
**To:** Media Enquiries <MediaEnquiries@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** FW: Nicola Willis - Kāinga Ora: The Labour Party candidate, the taxpayer-paid ad, and the cover-up  
**Importance:** High

Some people who received this message don't often get email from s9(2)(a) [Learn why this is important](#)

Kei te Rangatira, tēnā koe

I will be running a story about this on Thursday.

The context is – I have just filed an unrelated story in which I talked to academic s9(2)(a) about the political neutrality and integrity of the public service – so the allegations around your handling of the Arena Williams matter is topical.

I understand that Minister Woods has expressed her disappointment in the conduct of your agency.

Can we please arrange a time to speak on Thursday morning?

Ngā mihi

s9(2)(a)

Reporter

call: +64 s9(2)(a)

email: s9(2)(a)

twee s9(2)(a)

s9(2)(a)

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**From:** Ani O'Brien <ani.obrien@parliament.govt.nz>

**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 6:32 PM

**Subject:** PR: Nicola Willis - Kāinga Ora: The Labour Party candidate, the taxpayer-paid ad, and the cover-up



**Nicola Willis**

National Party Spokesperson for  
Housing & Urban Development (including Social)

10 November 2021

## **Kāinga Ora: The Labour Party candidate, the taxpayer-paid ad, and the cover-up**

The Minister of Housing must act to ensure high standards of political neutrality and integrity can be met by Government housing agency Kāinga Ora, following the release of documents

suggesting a troubling culture has taken root at the agency, says National's Housing Spokesperson Nicola Willis.

"Documents released to me under the Official Information Act show that just months before last years election, Kāinga Ora secretly commissioned, paid for and arranged publication of 'advertorial' material about Labour Party figure Arena Williams, and on finding out about her impending candidacy senior public servants agreed to 'proceed as though we didn't know'.

"Earlier this year I revealed Kāinga Ora had a half-million dollar deal with NZME to post favourable articles on OneRoof.co.nz. As part of that deal, an article was commissioned by Kāinga Ora, and published by NZME, regarding Arena Williams. The article was published three days before Ms Williams was confirmed as Labour's candidate in Manurewa.

"Documents I have now obtained prove that a senior official who knew Ms Williams arranged the story. She informed her senior colleagues that Ms Williams was seeking Labour Party candidacy and Kāinga Ora decided to proceed with the advertisement regardless.

"What's worse, those working for Kāinga Ora actively decided to hide the fact of Ms Williams's candidacy, with various statements in emails confirming this:

- **"we could proceed as though we didn't know about the impending announcement." (14 May 2020)**
- **"we can just act as though we don't know anything!" (15 May 2020)**
- **"please do remove mention of her Labour candidacy from this – it keeps Kāinga Ora's powder dry too" (19 May 2020)**
- **"while it's technically safe to publish now, removing the last para does keep us in the safe neutral space, especially as most people won't know about these rules" (19 May 2020)**

"These actions by senior public servants show a flagrant disregard for the proper use of taxpayer funds and the need for public agencies to consistently act with integrity and in the public interest.

"I am gravely concerned about the culture at Kāinga Ora. New Zealanders have a right to expect that the Government housing arm will focus its time and money on getting houses built – not promoting Labour Party candidates.

"Public servants must act in accordance with the Public Service Commission Standards of Integrity & Conduct which requires they act with honesty, and maintain the political neutrality required to enable them to work with current and future governments. These responsibilities go to the core of our democracy.

"The Minister of Housing, Megan Woods, is answerable to the public for the performance of Kāinga Ora. She has let this multi-billion dollar organisation get so emboldened that it thinks this is acceptable behaviour. It is not. Kāinga Ora must be brought back under control.

"The Minister must explain what she will do assure New Zealanders that Kāinga Ora has been held accountable for this sorry episode and that senior leaders at the agency understand their responsibility to act in deference to the public they serve, not the politicians they prefer."

Media contact: Nicola Willis 0274555431

*Authorised by G Hamilton, 41 Pipitea St, Wellington.*

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**From:** Marie Winfield  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 1:21 PM  
**To:** Martyn Watterson; Nick Maling  
**Subject:** FW: 'Shocking revelation': Kāinga Ora's selective memory on Labour links

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**From:** no-reply=businessdesk.co.nz@mail.businessdesk.co.nz <no-reply=businessdesk.co.nz@mail.businessdesk.co.nz> **On Behalf Of** BusinessDesk  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 1:08 PM  
**To:** Marie Winfield <Marie.Winfield@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** 'Shocking revelation': Kāinga Ora's selective memory on Labour links

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**POLITICS**

# 'Shocking revelation': Kāinga Ora's selective memory on Labour links

Jem Traylen | Thu, 11 Nov 2021

Housing minister Megan Woods has chastised officials for undertaking to deny knowing someone featured in government-funded advertising was a Labour party candidate.

Kāinga Ora emails obtained by the National party under the Official Information Act reveal an official told the candidate, Arena Williams (now an MP), “we can just act as though we don’t know anything!”, when discussing her political affiliations and its advertising campaign.

The emails showed that within three days of approaching Williams, Kāinga Ora was aware of Williams' pending candidacy as well as her concerns the advertising would be seen as electioneering.

## Not amused

Housing minister Megan Woods was clearly not amused and told the housing development agency “once they know something, they cannot un-know it”.

Woods learned of the offending emails in August this year when the agency consulted her office on a National party official information request concerning the offending ad.

National’s housing spokesperson Nicola Willis told BusinessDesk the emails revealed conduct that was a “stain on the public service” and would reflect poorly on Kāinga Ora if significant action wasn’t taken to make sure it never happened again.

She said it wasn’t clear to the public appropriate action had been taken and she would be calling on the Public Service Commissioner to step in if the agency didn’t respond appropriately.

Michael Macaulay, who teaches ethics at Victoria University’s School of Government, called the emails a “shocking revelation”.

He said what officials advised Williams ran “completely contrary to everything we would expect from public officials in terms of transparency and integrity”.

In his view, it was imperative that Kāinga Ora’s leadership find out why they gave that advice, why they had that attitude to begin with and what were they trying to achieve?

## Still defending

However, Kāinga Ora continued to defend the treatment as recently as last night. In a late Wednesday evening email, an agency communications manager suggested that BusinessDesk "should read the actual story first" and included a link to the original OneRoof article.

"When it was begun Arena Williams was not a Labour candidate," the spokesman wrote. "And still wasn't when the story was published. Anyone can clearly see it's not political, rather it's residential or community-focused! I can't help but notice Nicola Willis hasn't linked to the actual story anywhere. I wonder why?"

The ad was part of a campaign that appeared on OneRoof in May last year, featuring Williams as the face of Hobsonville's community spirit.

The ad went up just days before her selection as a Labour candidate was officially confirmed, and less than two months before the election campaign began.

Her office wrote to the agency to pass on her disappointment at some of the conduct revealed in the emails.

Kāinga Ora had already been in trouble because the content was published as news stories, rather than as advertising, as well as facing criticism for the amount spent. The ministry said it had no control over how the advertisements were presented.

Its Hobsonville Point development team solicited Williams' involvement after spotting Facebook posts about her community activism.

### **Political bias**

The emails also discussed whether the agency, itself, might face criticism for political bias.

Public agencies are required to be politically neutral.

However, any concerns about perceptions of impropriety were quickly brushed aside.

"I assured her it wasn't a problem in my view and we could proceed as though we didn't know about her impending announcement," wrote one employee.

A draft ad that apparently did disclose her candidacy was the subject of further email discussion.

Someone opined that the neutrality rules didn't apply before the election period began so it was "technically safe" to publish it.

However, as most people "won't know about these rules" they also advised playing it safe and removing the offending paragraph.

## General manager looped in

The emails also show that senior staff were involved in the discussions including the general manager of marketing and communications.

Woods told Newshub on Wednesday she had made it clear to Kāinga Ora she wasn't comfortable with any use of political candidates in its advertising.

A spokesperson for Kāinga Ora said it only became aware of Williams potential candidacy "in the latter stages" of the story being put together and attributed her ongoing involvement to a staff member's "personal judgement call".

Kāinga Ora said it takes its responsibility regarding political neutrality seriously and the relevant staff had been reminded to check with senior management to ensure all necessary steps were taken to fulfil its obligations under the public service code of conduct.

Willis said the response from Kāinga Ora was misleading because we know from the OIA response that a general manager had discussed the matter with the staff member.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jem Traylen

Reporter

[jem@businessdesk.co.nz](mailto:jem@businessdesk.co.nz)

Jem has previously worked in tertiary education and government policymaking. She has a masters in economics from the University of Canterbury and is currently completing a postgraduate diploma in journalism at Massey Wellington. You can follow her on Twitter [@jemtraylen](https://twitter.com/jemtraylen) or connect with her on LinkedIn [here](#).

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**From:** Martyn Watterson  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 1:29 PM  
**To:** Andrew McKenzie; Nick Maling; Marie Winfield; Rowan Macrae  
**Cc:** Rachel Kelly  
**Subject:** RE: Nicola Willis - Kāinga Ora: The Labour Party candidate, the taxpayer-paid ad, and the cover-up

I'll attribute it you as well. Cheers

**From:** Martyn Watterson  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 1:29 PM  
**To:** Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Nick Maling <Nick.Maling@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Marie Winfield <marie.winfield@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Rowan Macrae <Rowan.Macrae@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Cc:** Rachel Kelly <rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** RE: Nicola Willis - Kāinga Ora: The Labour Party candidate, the taxpayer-paid ad, and the cover-up

Thanks

**From:** Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 1:28 PM  
**To:** Martyn Watterson <Martyn.Watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Nick Maling <Nick.Maling@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Marie Winfield <Marie.Winfield@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Rowan Macrae <Rowan.Macrae@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Cc:** Rachel Kelly <rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** Re: Nicola Willis - Kāinga Ora: The Labour Party candidate, the taxpayer-paid ad, and the cover-up

Hi Martyn  
The statement is fine.  
Thanks  
Andrew

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---

**From:** Martyn Watterson <Martyn.Watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 11, 2021 1:25:36 PM  
**To:** Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Nick Maling <Nick.Maling@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Marie Winfield <Marie.Winfield@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Rowan Macrae <Rowan.Macrae@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Cc:** Rachel Kelly <rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** FW: Nicola Willis - Kāinga Ora: The Labour Party candidate, the taxpayer-paid ad, and the cover-up

Hi all

Please send revised statement which I need to send to BusinessDesk ASAP.

This reflects the conversations and meetings had today on this matter.

Any feedback needed ASAP as Business desk have published their story and we need to get our updated comments into it now.

['Shocking revelation': Kāinga Ora's selective memory on Labour links | BusinessDesk](#)

The statement needs to be attributed to someone. Andrew, I think it needs to go in your name. Are you ok with that?

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*While the article in question was politically neutral, one of our people made a personal judgement call that the story was about a Hobsonville Point community response and was being published prior to Arena William's candidacy being announced. This situation should have been handled better, and as Kāinga Ora takes its responsibilities around political neutrality very seriously, the employees involved were reminded about their obligations under the Public Service Code of Conduct.*

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**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 9:04 PM  
**To:** Media Enquiries <MediaEnquiries@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** FW: Nicola Willis - Kāinga Ora: The Labour Party candidate, the taxpayer-paid ad, and the cover-up  
**Importance:** High

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Ngā mihi  
Jem Traylen  
Reporter

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From: Ani O'Brien <ani.obrien@parliament.govt.nz>

Sent: Wednesday, 10 November 2021 6:32 PM

Subject: PR: Nicola Willis - Kāinga Ora: The Labour Party candidate, the taxpayer-paid ad, and the cover-up



## Nicola Willis

National Party Spokesperson for  
Housing & Urban Development (including Social)

10 November 2021

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The Minister of Housing must act to ensure high standards of political neutrality and integrity can be met by Government housing agency Kāinga Ora, following the release of documents suggesting a troubling culture has taken root at the agency, says National's Housing Spokesperson Nicola Willis.

"Documents released to me under the Official Information Act show that just months before last year's election, Kāinga Ora secretly commissioned, paid for and arranged publication of 'advertorial' material about Labour Party figure Arena Williams, and on finding out about her impending candidacy senior public servants agreed to *'proceed as though we didn't know'*."

"Earlier this year I revealed Kāinga Ora had a half-million dollar deal with NZME to post favourable articles on OneRoof.co.nz. As part of that deal, an article was commissioned by Kāinga Ora, and published by NZME, regarding Arena Williams. The article was published three days before Ms Williams was confirmed as Labour's candidate in Manurewa."

"Documents I have now obtained prove that a senior official who knew Ms Williams arranged the story. She informed her senior colleagues that Ms Williams was seeking Labour Party candidacy and Kāinga Ora decided to proceed with the advertisement regardless."

"What's worse, those working for Kāinga Ora actively decided to hide the fact of Ms Williams's candidacy, with various statements in emails confirming this:

- "we could proceed as though we didn't know about the impending announcement." (14 May 2020)
- "we can just act as though we don't know anything!" (15 May 2020)
- "please do remove mention of her Labour candidacy from this – it keeps Kāinga Ora's powder dry too" (19 May 2020)

**- “while it’s technically safe to publish now, removing the last para does keep us in the safe neutral space, especially as most people won’t know about these rules” (19 May 2020)**

“These actions by senior public servants show a flagrant disregard for the proper use of taxpayer funds and the need for public agencies to consistently act with integrity and in the public interest.

“I am gravely concerned about the culture at Kāinga Ora. New Zealanders have a right to expect that the Government housing arm will focus its time and money on getting houses built – not promoting Labour Party candidates.

“Public servants must act in accordance with the Public Service Commission Standards of Integrity & Conduct which requires they act with honesty, and maintain the political neutrality required to enable them to work with current and future governments. These responsibilities go to the core of our democracy.

“The Minister of Housing, Megan Woods, is answerable to the public for the performance of Kāinga Ora. She has let this multi-billion dollar organisation get so emboldened that it thinks this is acceptable behaviour. It is not. Kāinga Ora must be brought back under control.

“The Minister must explain what she will do assure New Zealanders that Kāinga Ora has been held accountable for this sorry episode and that senior leaders at the agency understand their responsibility to act in deference to the public they serve, not the politicians they prefer.”

Media contact: Nicola Willis 0274555431



*Authorised by G Hamilton, 41 Pipitea St, Wellington*

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**From:** Andrew McKenzie  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 3:18 PM  
**To:** Mark Fraser  
**Subject:** FW: Interview request

**Importance:** High

**From:** Martyn Watterson <Martyn.Watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 3:11 PM  
**To:** Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Nick Maling <Nick.Maling@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Rowan Macrae <Rowan.Macrae@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Marie Winfield <Marie.Winfield@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Rachel Kelly <rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Media Enquiries <MediaEnquiries@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Sharon Girvan <Sharon.Girvan@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** FW: Interview request  
**Importance:** High

Hi all

See request from NewsHub re an interview as a follow-up to last night's story on the One Roof issue. We have the following statement to provide.

I'll give the MO a heads-up.

Thanks

**To be attributed to Andrew McKenzie, Chief Executive, Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities**

Kāinga Ora takes its responsibility regarding political neutrality seriously. Our employees are made aware of their responsibility to be politically impartial when they start with us and are reminded of these obligations from time to time as appropriate.

One of our people made a personal judgement call that the story was about a Hobsonville Point community response and was being published prior to Arena William's candidacy being announced. This situation should have been handled better, and as Kāinga Ora takes its responsibilities around political neutrality very seriously, the employees involved were reminded about their obligations under the Public Service Code of Conduct.

This was done via an in person meeting with the employees. In addition targeted training was given to this team in person by the Government Relations Manager and information on the Public Service Act provided.

Everyone involved, and Kāinga Ora has learnt from this to prevent these types of situations from happening again. Kāinga Ora is confident that our employees uphold the Public Service Commission's standards of integrity and conduct and that we maintain political neutrality.

Ends//

----- Forwarded message -----

From: s9(2)(a)  
Date: Thu, Nov 11, 2021 at 1:31 PM  
Subject: Interview request  
To: Quentin Bright <[quentin.bright@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:quentin.bright@kaingaora.govt.nz)>

Hi Quentin

I'll be following up on s9(2)(a) from last night today

Could I please request an interview with Andrew McKenzie?

Thank you

s9(2)(a) **POLITICAL REPORTER**

NEWS DISCOVERY NZ MOBILE s9(2)(a) [DISCOVERYCORPORATE.CO.NZ](http://DISCOVERYCORPORATE.CO.NZ)



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**From:** Andrew McKenzie  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 6:00 PM  
**To:** s9(2)(a)  
**Cc:** Graeme Mowday; Mark Fraser; Martyn Watterson  
**Subject:** RE: s9(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story 7

Hi s9(2)(a)

Just a follow up on the below, the key issue for the Minister is the comments in your emails rather than the decision per se and we do need to ensure that is not repeated. I know you have already discussed that with Graeme while Rachel Kelly's team has also been giving you guidance.

Newshub have interviewed me about this and my response was:

- Two matters being looked at
  - o Judgement call on political neutrality
  - o Some flippant comments in an employee's emails
- There has been some confusion over which issue was being referred to at times.
- Given political perspective we would probably exercise judgement on the campaign differently in future.
- The flippant comments are not what we would expect
- The people involved have been talked to.
- Received guidance and education.
- Sure it won't happen again (both parts).
- Not a systemic cultural issue for Kāinga Ora, one off matter.
- There has not been a cover-up, we have released information and responded to both issues as they have emerged.
- Given some of the comments from Minister and opposition we welcome the Public Service Commission examining this, we will get the benefit of their experience and perspective on things we need to do differently.
- Where people get things wrong our approach is to work with them to learn and develop from those situations.

Any questions please feel free to give me a call  
Andrew

**From:** s9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 10:50 AM  
**To:** Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Cc:** Graeme Mowday <Graeme.Mowday@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Mark Fraser <Mark.Fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** RE: s9(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story

s9(2)(a)



**From:** Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 9:54 AM  
**To:** s9(2)(a)  
**Cc:** Graeme Mowday <Graeme.Mowday@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Mark Fraser <Mark.Fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** Re: s9(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story

Hi s9(2)(a)

Just checking in to make sure you are OK today - I hope Ted Lasso was good! As I am sure you will have been told, the judgement call you made was fine, and I am happy to stand behind you on it. This little maelstrom will pass quickly, I just hope it doesn't make you too risk averse! If you are feeling a bit off at all, please reach out for support.

Take care

Andrew McKenzie

---

**From:** s9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 10, 2021 3:48 PM  
**To:** Quentin Bright; Graeme Mowday; Martyn Watterson; Rachel Kelly  
**Cc:** Andrew McKenzie; Don Badman; Mark Fraser; Nick Maling  
**Subject:** RE: s9(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story

Thanks mate.

s9(2)(a)

**From:** Quentin Bright <Quentin.Bright@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 3:36 PM  
**To:** s9(2)(a); Graeme Mowday <Graeme.Mowday@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Martyn Watterson <Martyn.Watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Rachel Kelly <rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Cc:** Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Don Badman <Don.Badman@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Mark Fraser <Mark.Fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Nick Maling <Nick.Maling@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** s9(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story

Tēnā koutou katoa. Just a heads-up that Minister Woods was door-stopped s9(2)(a) on her way into Parliament and asked about the matter. The Minister expressed her disappointment about the text in one email but stood the ground on the fact that story was not a matter of political bias.

Kāinga Ora has supplied largely the same lines as it did in response to Newshub back in June. All the steps that were taken with the compilation and publication of the story were correct; there was no political reference or bias in the story.

I have specifically [s9(2)(a)] not to mention any individual's name in the email thread. To be honest, I don't think she would have but it is now on record that we specifically asked for that. I'm 99.9999% she won't name you, [s9(2)(a)] She might get shitty with my response and put my name as spokesperson. Lol. That's why I am paid the ginormous bucks. Actually, on that Andrew ... ☺

Ngā mihi

Q



## Quentin Bright

Senior Media Advisor  
Corporate Communications and Media  
National Services

Mobile: [s9(2)(a)]

Email: [quentin.bright@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:quentin.bright@kaingaora.govt.nz)

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Freephone: 0800 801 601 | Mainline: (04) 439 3000 | Kāinga Ora - Homes and Communities  
PO BOX 0000 Wellington 6140 | New Zealand Government | [www.kaingaora.govt.nz](http://www.kaingaora.govt.nz)

Released under the Official Information Act 1982



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**From:** Andrew McKenzie  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 6:11 PM  
**To:** Martyn Watterson  
**Subject:** Re: Interview request 2

Hi Martyn

Can you be clear that the flippant comments re forgetting she saw it are not acceptable and don't need a political perspective for me to understand that.

Thanks

Andrew

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---

**From:** Martyn Watterson <Martyn.Watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 11, 2021 6:07 PM  
**To:** Media Notification; Media Enquiries  
**Subject:** FW: Interview request

Kia ora

A heads-up the CE was interviewed by NewsHub this evening for a story tonight about the One Roof advertorial and emails /claims that showing Kainga Ora 'took steps to disclose the fact Arena Williams was planning to run as a Labour candidate when it used her for advertorial content.'

Andrew's responded to questions about the culture of the agency in regards to political neutrality and the steps taken in response to issues identified in an OIA.

Key points made include (but not limited to):

Given political perspective we would probably exercise judgement on the campaign and some of the comments made in emails differently in future  
the people involved have been received guidance and education  
this not a systemic cultural issue for Kāinga Ora  
we welcome the Public Service Commission examining this, we will get the benefit of their experience and perspective on things we need to do differently.  
Where people get things wrong our approach is to work with them to learn and develop from those situations.

Cheers

----- Forwarded message -----

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**Date:** Thu, Nov 11, 2021 at 1:31 PM  
**Subject:** Interview request  
**To:** Quentin Bright <[quentin.bright@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:quentin.bright@kaingaora.govt.nz)>

Hi Quentin

I'll be following up on s9(2)(a) story from last night today

Could I please request an interview with Andrew McKenzie?

Thank you

s9(2)(a) POLITICAL REPORTER

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**From:** s9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 6:12 PM  
**To:** Andrew McKenzie  
**Cc:** Graeme Mowday; Mark Fraser; Martyn Watterson  
**Subject:** Re: s9(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story 5

s9(2)(a)

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**From:** Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 11, 2021 5:59 PM  
**To:** s9(2)(a)  
**Cc:** Graeme Mowday; Mark Fraser; Martyn Watterson  
**Subject:** RE: s9(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story

Hi s9(2)(a)

Just a follow up on the below, the key issue for the Minister is the comments in your emails rather than the decision per se and we do need to ensure that is not repeated. I know you have already discussed that with Graeme while Rachel Kelly's team has also been giving you guidance.

Newshub have interviewed me about this and my response was:

Two matters being looked at

Judgement call on political neutrality

Some flippant comments in an employee's emails

There has been some confusion over which issue was being referred to at times.

Given political perspective we would probably exercise judgement on the campaign differently in future.

The flippant comments are not what we would expect

The people involved have been talked to.

Received guidance and education.

Sure it won't happen again (both parts).

Not a systemic cultural issue for Kāinga Ora, one off matter.

There has not been a cover-up, we have released information and responded to both issues as they have emerged.

Given some of the comments from Minister and opposition we welcome the Public Service Commission examining this, we will get the benefit of their experience and perspective on things we need to do differently.

Where people get things wrong our approach is to work with them to learn and develop from those situations.

Any questions please feel free to give me a call  
Andrew

**From:** s9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 10:50 AM  
**To:** Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Cc:** Graeme Mowday <Graeme.Mowday@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Mark Fraser <Mark.Fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** RE: s9(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story

s9(2)(a)

**From:** Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 9:54 AM  
**To:** s9(2)(a)  
**Cc:** Graeme Mowday <Graeme.Mowday@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Mark Fraser <Mark.Fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** Re: s9(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story

Hi s9(2)(a)

Just checking in to make sure you are OK today - I hope Ted Lasso was good! As I am sure you will have been told, the judgement call you made was fine, and I am happy to stand behind you on it. This little maelstrom will pass quickly, I just hope it doesn't make you too risk averse! If you are feeling a bit off at all, please reach out for support.

Take care

Andrew McKenzie

---

**From:** s9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 10, 2021 3:48 PM  
**To:** Quentin Bright; Graeme Mowday; Martyn Watterson; Rachel Kelly  
**Cc:** Andrew McKenzie; Don Badman; Mark Fraser; Nick Maling  
**Subject:** RE: s9(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story

Thanks mate.

s9(2)(a)

s9(2)(a)

**From:** Quentin Bright <[Quentin.Bright@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:Quentin.Bright@kaingaora.govt.nz)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 3:36 PM

**To:** s9(2)(a) Graeme Mowday  
<[Graeme.Mowday@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:Graeme.Mowday@kaingaora.govt.nz)>; Martyn Watterson <[Martyn.Watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:Martyn.Watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz)>; Rachel Kelly  
<[rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz)>

**Cc:** Andrew McKenzie <[Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz)>; Don Badman <[Don.Badman@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:Don.Badman@kaingaora.govt.nz)>;  
Mark Fraser <[Mark.Fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:Mark.Fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz)>; Nick Maling <[Nick.Maling@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:Nick.Maling@kaingaora.govt.nz)>

**Subject:** s9(2)(a) query re Hobsonville Point story

Tēnā koutou katoa. Just a heads-up that Minister Woods was door-stopped s9(2)(a) on her way into Parliament and asked about the matter. The Minister expressed her disappointment about the text in one email but stood the ground on the fact that story was not a matter of political bias.

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I have specifically s9(2)(a) not to mention any individual's name in the email thread. To be honest, I don't think she would have but it is now on record that we specifically asked for that. I'm 99.9999% she won't name you, s9(2)(a) She might get shitty with my response and put my name as spokesperson. Lol. That's why I am paid the ginormous bucks. Actually, on that Andrew ... 😊

Ngā mihi

Q



**Quentin Bright**

**Senior Media Advisor  
Corporate Communications and Media  
National Services**

Mobile: s9(2)(a)  
Email: [quentin.bright@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:quentin.bright@kaingaora.govt.nz)

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Released under the Official Information Act 1982

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**From:** Rachel Kelly  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 7:02 PM  
**To:** Andrew McKenzie  
**Subject:** FW: Official Information Act response for communications relating to an article on OneRoof

FYI – I will put together a fuller note, but with this I considered and noted it in terms of the OIA response and the conversations I had with various areas of the business during response to this OIA.

Rach

**From:** David Durie <David.Durie@parliament.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 4 August 2021 9:21 AM  
**To:** Rachel Kelly <rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** FW: Official Information Act response for communications relating to an article on OneRoof

Hi Rachel,

The Minister is disappointed in the way Kāinga Ora has conducted itself in this instance. Please can the below points be re-iterated to the organisation.

Cheers,

**David Durie**  
Private Secretary (Housing)  
[David.durie@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:David.durie@parliament.govt.nz) | 04 817 9782 | s9(2)(a)

**Office of Hon Dr Megan Woods**  
**Minister of Energy and Resources | Minister of Research, Science and Innovation | Minister of Housing | Associate Minister of Finance**  
Private Bag 18041 | Parliament Buildings | Wellington 6160 | New Zealand  
Office Phone: +64 4 817 8705 Email: [m.woods@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:m.woods@ministers.govt.nz)

**From:** Ben Cunliffe  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 3 August 2021 5:58 PM  
**To:** David Durie <David.Durie@parliament.govt.nz>  
**Cc:** Matt Greer <Matt.Greer@parliament.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** Official Information Act response for communications relating to an article on OneRoof

Hi David,

The Minister has reviewed the emails to be released as part of the Official Information Act response relating to an article on OneRoof and wants to convey that some of the conduct reflected in the emails does not meet her expectations for how Kainga Ora should operate.

In particular, she has asked me to emphasise that Kainga Ora should operate on the same basis as the Minister; once they know something, they cannot un-know it.

It's important that Kainga Ora operates with the highest professionalism and the Minister would appreciate that message being re-iterated.

Regards,  
Ben

**Ben Cunliffe | Senior Ministerial Advisor**

**Office of Hon Dr Megan Woods**

**Minister of Energy and Resources | Minister of Research, Science and Innovation | Minister of Housing |**

**Associate Minister of Finance**

DDI: 04 817 9795 | Mobile: s9(2)(a)

[SEEMAIL]

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**From:** Mark Fraser  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 8:40 PM  
**To:** Rachel Kelly  
**Subject:** RE: Transcript for oral questions today

Thanks Rachel. Interesting day!

Regards,

Mark.



**Mark Fraser** (he/him)

General Manager  
Urban Development Delivery

Mobile: s9(2)(a)  
Email: [mark.fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:mark.fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz)

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Catalina Workshops, 3 Boundary Road, Hobsonville, Auckland 0616  
Kāinga Ora - Homes and Communities  
PO BOX 84143 Westgate Auckland 0657 | New Zealand Government | [www.kaingaora.govt.nz](http://www.kaingaora.govt.nz)

**From:** Rachel Kelly <[rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 5:04 PM  
**To:** Andrew McKenzie <[Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz)>; Rowan Macrae <[Rowan.Macrae@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:Rowan.Macrae@kaingaora.govt.nz)>; Nick Maling <[Nick.Maling@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:Nick.Maling@kaingaora.govt.nz)>; Mark Fraser <[Mark.Fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:Mark.Fraser@kaingaora.govt.nz)>; Marie Winfield <[Marie.Winfield@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:Marie.Winfield@kaingaora.govt.nz)>; Graeme Mowday <[Graeme.Mowday@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:Graeme.Mowday@kaingaora.govt.nz)>; Martyn Watterson <[Martyn.Watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:Martyn.Watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz)>; Governance Leadership Team <[GovLeadTeam@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:GovLeadTeam@kaingaora.govt.nz)>; Gov Admin <[GovAdmin@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:GovAdmin@kaingaora.govt.nz)>  
**Cc:** Government Relations <[Government.Relations@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:Government.Relations@kaingaora.govt.nz)>  
**Subject:** Transcript for oral questions today

Hi

FYI - below is the transcript from the oral questions on housing today, and a big thank you from to team for pulling all the information together to support the response:

## Question No. 1—Housing

**1. BROOKE VAN VELDEN (Deputy Leader—ACT)** to the **Minister of Housing**: What actions, if any, will she take in response to revelations that an upcoming political candidate was used in a Kāinga Ora promotion, and does she believe the culture of Kāinga Ora is upholding what is expected of the Public Service?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS (Minister of Housing)**: I have already taken actions. On 3 August, my office wrote to Kāinga Ora in response to receiving a departmental Official Information Act request that Kāinga Ora was processing. That email outlined my concerns that the conduct reflected in the information release did not meet my expectations for how Kāinga Ora should operate. In particular, I emphasised that my expectation was that Kāinga Ora should operate on the same basis that I do: once you know something, you cannot unknow it. I also made explicit in my email that Kāinga Ora fell well short of my expectations in dealing with this. I have also discussed the matter with the chair of Kāinga Ora, who is clear that what happened was wrong and is committed to ensuring it never happens again. And finally, as a belts and braces approach, I requested the Public Service Commission for some advice on whether anything further needs to be done.

**Brooke van Velden**: Will she hold an independent inquiry into the culture of Kāinga Ora, and, if not, why not?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS**: As I indicated in answer to my primary question, I have taken the precautionary approach of asking the Public Service Commission for some advice on whether anything further needs to be done. In terms of this instance, as I've made clear, it fell well short of my expectations.

Point of order, Mr Speaker. I seek leave to table an email from my office dated 3 August to Kāinga Ora making clear that the conduct described in the questions fell well short of my expectations.

**SPEAKER**: Is there any objection to that document being tabled? There appears to be none.

Leave received to table document.

**Brooke van Velden**: Does she agree that senior Kāinga Ora staff were attempting to cover up the politicisation of a Government agency in the promotion of a future Labour Party candidate, and, if not, how would she categorise this statement made by a senior Kāinga Ora staff member, "She's understandably nervous about people perceiving this as her electioneering ahead of her campaign announcement [but] we can just act as though we don't know anything!"?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS**: I think what that statement shows is that the candidate in question did everything that she needed to do to inform the agency that she was seeking selection for a political party. As I've made clear in answers to subsequent questions to the member, the way in which it was handled by the department fell well short of my expectations. In particular, I have already written to the department saying it is simply not possible to unknow something once you know it, and I expect the agency to adhere to that principle.

**Nicola Willis**: Can she confirm she in fact learnt about this conduct in June, according to emails released by Kāinga Ora, and why has it taken until today for her to engage the Public Service Commission into what are grave matters of integrity in the housing entity she is responsible for?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS**: On 23 July, my office was copied into Arena Williams' reply to Kāinga Ora's consultation on information to be released. As I've said in the House, on 3 August, as soon as I read the Official Information Act request and the documents that came through to my office, I sent an email to the organisation. My reason for contacting the Public Service Commission today is that responses to media queries over the last 24 hours by the agency suggest to me they're not taking the matter as seriously as it needs to be.

**Brooke van Velden**: How can New Zealanders have faith in the culture of Kāinga Ora, when part of its half-million-dollar deal for advertorial content was arranged publication of a future Labour Party candidate that senior staff knew about?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS**: The public can have faith in Kāinga Ora, not only because it is delivering on housing for New Zealanders but also, as I indicated in the answer to the primary question, that the chair of Kāinga Ora, Vui Mark Gosche, has made it clear that what has happened is wrong, it cannot happen again, and it is the board's responsibility to ensure that it does not happen again.

**Brooke van Velden:** What does it say of the standards of this Government if she won't hold an inquiry but simply writes a letter, and can she describe what actions she would find unacceptable enough for her to open an inquiry?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS:** What it says about this Government is that when we proactively see a problem, we take action on it. On 3 August, I wrote to Kāinga Ora exercising my ministerial duty to make it clear that the behaviour and conduct was well short of my expectations. Furthermore, when I saw responses to media queries over the last 24-hour period that I felt were not of the standard that I expected, I did contact the Public Service Commission and asked them for some advice.

**Nicola Willis:** What responsibility does she take for allowing a culture to emerge at Kāinga Ora that made this sort of unethical conduct acceptable not only to a senior communications adviser but to a general manager?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS:** I take my responsibilities very seriously and that's exactly why I wrote to the organisation on 3 August, making it clear that this was well short of my expectations as the responsible Minister. It is exactly why I raised the matter with the chief executive. It's exactly why I raised the matter with the chair of the board.

## • Question No. 9—Housing

**9. NICOLA WILLIS (National) to the Minister of Housing:** How did she make it clear to Kāinga Ora that she is "not comfortable with them using political candidates" in their advertising, and what actions have been taken by Kāinga Ora to address her concerns?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS (Minister of Housing):** As outlined in my answer to question No. 1 from the ACT Party earlier today, on 3 August, my office wrote an email to Kāinga Ora outlining my concerns with the conduct reflected in the information released under the Official Information Act. I'm advised that at the time, the face-to-face meeting was held with the staff member involved, who was reminded of their obligations under the Public Service code of conduct. Again, as outlined in my answer to question No. 1, I have also discussed the matter with the chair of Kāinga Ora, who was clear that what has happened was wrong and is committed to ensuring it never happens again. Finally, again, as outlined in the answer to question No. 1 today, as a belts and braces approach, I've asked the Public Service Commission for some advice on whether anything further needs to be done.

**Nicola Willis:** Why did her office wait until August to convey this displeasure, when documents released to me show she first asked for clarification about this matter on 23 June?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS:** It was on 2 August that my office received a bundle of documents that would be released by the agency under Official Information Act requests, that was the back and forth correspondence within the agency about the article that appeared on *OneRoof*. My discomfort was with the way it was dealt with, in particular the way that there was a suggestion that we could un-know about something that had happened. That is exactly what I conveyed to the organisation within 12 hours of reading those documents.

**Nicola Willis:** What follow-up, if any, did she do following the token email her—

**SPEAKER:** Order! Order! Right, the member knows that's not in order, doesn't she? Right, well, she's used a supplementary.

**Nicola Willis:** Ah, Mr Speaker, point of order. I don't think my question was out of order. I think that I could have—

**SPEAKER:** No, you'll now resume your seat. I asked the member whether she knew that it was out of order. She nodded her head to confirm that she did. You can't be right both ways.

**Nicola Willis:** What follow-up, if any, did she do following the email her office sent in August to ensure Kāinga Ora had done anything to address the grossly unprofessional conduct that had occurred; and isn't it the case that precisely nothing has changed at Kāinga Ora since she sent her email?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS:** I think, actually, I've covered what follow-up has occurred over numerous answers that I've given in the House today. The email was sent on 3 August. I raised it at a meeting with officials, both with Kāinga Ora but also with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, who is the monitoring agency for Kāinga Ora. I have subsequently spoken to the chief executive again, I have spoken to the chair, and I have asked for advice from the Public Service Commission.

**Nicola Willis:** Does she consider that Kāinga Ora takes her as Minister seriously, when in the past 24 hours, a senior communications adviser has released grossly misleading statements to the media claiming that a Kāinga Ora staff member made a personal judgment call on this matter, when there is documentary proof a general manager signed it off?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS:** Yes, I do have confidence that this matter is being taken seriously, and that my expectations as Minister are being taken seriously.

Many thanks

Rach



### Rachel Kelly (she/her)

Manager, Government Relations  
Governance

Mobile: [REDACTED] s9(2)(a)  
Email: [rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz)

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**Mahi Tahī**  
*Better Together*

**Whanake**  
*Be Bold*

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PO Box 2628 Wellington 6140 | New Zealand Government | [www.kaingaora.govt.nz](http://www.kaingaora.govt.nz)

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**From:** Martyn Watterson  
**Sent:** Friday, 12 November 2021 10:27 AM  
**To:** Andrew McKenzie  
**Cc:** Marie Winfield  
**Subject:** FW: Nicola Willis - Kāinga Ora: The Labour Party candidate, the taxpayer-paid ad, and the cover-up 3

Hi Andrew

A heads-up, here's the updated Business Desk story:

[Kāinga Ora tries to clean up self-made mess | BusinessDesk](#)

While the story has been updated with the comments from the revised statement and our position, all up it's not a good read.

Note, the story says the statement we initially supplied on Wednesday was not representative of the agency's view. That's not correct – in my email to the reporter I said Q's comments in his email (the reference to Nicola Willis) were not representative of the agency. (It's not something I wanted to do, but it was a call I had to make given the reaction to his email from some quarters). I could get the reporter to correct it, but it's also another opportunity to refresh the story.

We're doing a comprehensive de-brief on how this issue was managed, including with GRU, as there's a lot we can improve on.

Cheers

**From:** Martyn Watterson  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 1:56 PM  
**To:** s9(2)(a)  
**Subject:** RE: Nicola Willis - Kāinga Ora: The Labour Party candidate, the taxpayer-paid ad, and the cover-up  
**Importance:** High

See revised statement. Thanks

Can you please update the story with this revised version.

In addition to the statement below, please note, the comments provided by the senior media advisor (not a communications manager as noted in your story) in his email to you last night are not representative of the organisation's view on this issue and the seriousness in which it's being taken.

Thanks again

Martyn

**To be attributed to Andrew McKenzie, Chief Executive, Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities**

Kāinga Ora takes its responsibility regarding political neutrality seriously. Our employees are made aware of their responsibility to be politically impartial when they start with us and are reminded of these obligations from time to time as appropriate.

One of our people made a personal judgement call that the story was about a Hobsonville Point community response and was being published prior to Arena William's candidacy being announced. This situation should have been handled better, and as Kāinga Ora takes its responsibilities around political neutrality very seriously, the employees involved were reminded about their obligations under the Public Service Code of Conduct.

This was done via an in person meeting with the employees. In addition targeted training was given to this team in person by the Government Relations Manager and information on the Public Service Act provided.

Everyone involved, and Kāinga Ora has learnt from this to prevent these types of situations from happening again. Kāinga Ora is confident that our employees uphold the Public Service Commission's standards of integrity and conduct and that we maintain political neutrality.

Ends//

**From:** Martyn Watterson

**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 1:17 PM

**To:** s9(2)(a)

**Subject:** RE: Nicola Willis - Kāinga Ora: The Labour Party candidate, the taxpayer-paid ad, and the cover-up

**Importance:** High

s9(2)(a)

Martyn here from Kāinga Ora. I'll be sending to you soon an updated response from the one sent last night.

Regards

Martyn



**Martyn Watterson**

Manager Corporate Communications and Media  
National Services Group

Mobile: s9(2)(a)

Email: [martyn.watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:martyn.watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz)

**From:** s9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 9:04 PM  
**To:** Media Enquiries <MediaEnquiries@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** FW: Nicola Willis - Kāinga Ora: The Labour Party candidate, the taxpayer-paid ad, and the cover-up  
**Importance:** High

Some people who received this message don't often get email from s9(2)(a) [Learn why this is important](#)  
Kei te Rangatira, tēnā koe

I will be running a story about this on Thursday.

The context is – I have just filed an unrelated story in which I talked to academic s9(2)(a) about the political neutrality and integrity of the public service – so the allegations around your handling of the Arena Williams matter is topical.

I understand that Minister Woods has expressed her disappointment in the conduct of your agency.

Can we please arrange a time to speak on Thursday morning?

Ngā mihi

s9(2)(a)

Reporter

call: +64 s9(2)(a)

email: s9(2)(a)

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www s9(2)(a)

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**From:** Ani O'Brien <ani.obrien@parliament.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 6:32 PM  
**Subject:** PR: Nicola Willis - Kāinga Ora: The Labour Party candidate, the taxpayer-paid ad, and the cover-up



## Nicola Willis

National Party Spokesperson for  
Housing & Urban Development (including Social)

10 November 2021

### Kāinga Ora: The Labour Party candidate, the taxpayer-paid ad, and the cover-up

The Minister of Housing must act to ensure high standards of political neutrality and integrity can be met by Government housing agency Kāinga Ora, following the release of documents suggesting a troubling culture has taken root at the agency, says National's Housing Spokesperson Nicola Willis.

"Documents released to me under the Official Information Act show that just months before last year's election, Kāinga Ora secretly commissioned, paid for and arranged publication of 'advertorial' material about Labour Party figure Arena Williams, and on finding out about her impending candidacy senior public servants agreed to *'proceed as though we didn't know'*."

"Earlier this year I revealed Kāinga Ora had a half-million dollar deal with NZME to post favourable articles on OneRoof.co.nz. As part of that deal, an article was commissioned by Kāinga Ora, and published by NZME, regarding Arena Williams. The article was published three days before Ms Williams was confirmed as Labour's candidate in Manurewa."

"Documents I have now obtained prove that a senior official who knew Ms Williams arranged the story. She informed her senior colleagues that Ms Williams was seeking Labour Party candidacy and Kāinga Ora decided to proceed with the advertisement regardless."

"What's worse, those working for Kāinga Ora actively decided to hide the fact of Ms Williams's candidacy, with various statements in emails confirming this:

- **"we could proceed as though we didn't know about the impending announcement."** (14 May 2020)
- **"we can just act as though we don't know anything!"** (15 May 2020)
- **"please do remove mention of her Labour candidacy from this – it keeps Kāinga Ora's powder dry too"** (19 May 2020)
- **"while it's technically safe to publish now, removing the last para does keep us in the safe neutral space, especially as most people won't know about these rules"** (19 May 2020)

"These actions by senior public servants show a flagrant disregard for the proper use of taxpayer funds and the need for public agencies to consistently act with integrity and in the public interest."



"I am gravely concerned about the culture at Kāinga Ora. New Zealanders have a right to expect that the Government housing arm will focus its time and money on getting houses built – not promoting Labour Party candidates.

"Public servants must act in accordance with the Public Service Commission Standards of Integrity & Conduct which requires they act with honesty, and maintain the political neutrality required to enable them to work with current and future governments. These responsibilities go to the core of our democracy.

"The Minister of Housing, Megan Woods, is answerable to the public for the performance of Kāinga Ora. She has let this multi-billion dollar organisation get so emboldened that it thinks this is acceptable behaviour. It is not. Kāinga Ora must be brought back under control.

"The Minister must explain what she will do assure New Zealanders that Kāinga Ora has been held accountable for this sorry episode and that senior leaders at the agency understand their responsibility to act in deference to the public they serve, not the politicians they prefer."

Media contact: Nicola Willis 0274555431



*Authorised by G Hamilton, 41 Pipitea St, Wellington.*

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Released under the Official Information Act 1982

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**From:** Campbell Roberts  
**Sent:** Friday, 12 November 2021 12:11 PM  
**To:** Mark Gosche; Sharon Girvan; Kāinga Ora Board Members; Andrew McKenzie  
**Cc:** Gov Admin Old; Al Witcombe  
**Subject:** Re: Transcript for oral questions 2

Thanks Vui this is a matter of concern. Appreciate your actions. It will be good to talk further at the next Board.

Regards

Vui

---

**From:** Mark Gosche <Mark.Gosche@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Friday, November 12, 2021 12:05:40 PM  
**To:** Sharon Girvan <Sharon.Girvan@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Kāinga Ora Board Members <KaingaOraBoardMembers@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Cc:** Gov Admin <GovAdmin@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Al Witcombe <Al.Witcombe@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** Re: Transcript for oral questions

Hi All

In my discussion with the Minister yesterday prior to question time I made it clear (as you will see in her answers) that as board chair I expect the organisation to accept that we got it wrong, we accept the seriousness of the matter and that all steps have and will be taken to address this - including all our people understanding our responsibilities under the code of conduct; and to ensure this type of thing does not happen again. I also expect the media responses to reflect this position. Andrew and I discussed this and he is working to this agenda.

Regards

Vui

---

**From:** Sharon Girvan <Sharon.Girvan@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Friday, November 12, 2021 8:04 AM  
**To:** Kāinga Ora Board Members  
**Cc:** Gov Admin; Al Witcombe  
**Subject:** Fwd: Transcript for oral questions

Hello members

FYI - below is the transcript from the oral questions on housing yesterday. This was a developing situation yesterday and a brief will be provided when we have unpicked the lessons for forward state. We are also looking at process improvement for our no surprises approach.

Regards sharon

## Question No. 1—Housing

**1. BROOKE VAN VELDEN (Deputy Leader—ACT) to the Minister of Housing:** What actions, if any, will she take in response to revelations that an upcoming political candidate was used in a Kāinga Ora promotion, and does she believe the culture of Kāinga Ora is upholding what is expected of the Public Service?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS (Minister of Housing):** I have already taken actions. On 3 August, my office wrote to Kāinga Ora in response to receiving a departmental Official Information Act request that Kāinga Ora was processing. That email outlined my concerns that the conduct reflected in the information release did not meet my expectations for how Kāinga Ora should operate. In particular, I emphasised that my expectation was that Kāinga Ora should operate on the same basis that I do: once you know something, you cannot unknow it. I also made explicit in my email that Kāinga Ora fell well short of my expectations in dealing with this. I have also discussed the matter with the chair of Kāinga Ora, who is clear that what happened was wrong and is committed to ensuring it never happens again. And finally, as a belts and braces approach, I requested the Public Service Commission for some advice on whether anything further needs to be done.

**Brooke van Velden:** Will she hold an independent inquiry into the culture of Kāinga Ora, and, if not, why not?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS:** As I indicated in answer to my primary question, I have taken the precautionary approach of asking the Public Service Commission for some advice on whether anything further needs to be done. In terms of this instance, as I've made clear, it fell well short of my expectations.

Point of order, Mr Speaker. I seek leave to table an email from my office dated 3 August to Kāinga Ora making clear that the conduct described in the questions fell well short of my expectations.

**SPEAKER:** Is there any objection to that document being tabled? There appears to be none.

Leave received to table document.

**Brooke van Velden:** Does she agree that senior Kāinga Ora staff were attempting to cover up the politicisation of a Government agency in the promotion of a future Labour Party candidate, and, if not, how would she categorise this statement made by a senior Kāinga Ora staff member, "She's understandably nervous about people perceiving this as her electioneering ahead of her campaign announcement [but] we can just act as though we don't know anything!"?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS:** I think what that statement shows is that the candidate in question did everything that she needed to do to inform the agency that she was seeking selection for a political party. As I've made clear in answers to subsequent questions to the member, the way in which it was handled by the department fell well short of my expectations. In particular, I have already written to the department saying it is simply not possible to unknow something once you know it, and I expect the agency to adhere to that principle.

**Nicola Willis:** Can she confirm she in fact learnt about this conduct in June, according to emails released by Kāinga Ora, and why has it taken until today for her to engage the Public Service Commission into what are grave matters of integrity in the housing entity she is responsible for?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS:** On 23 July, my office was copied into Arena Williams' reply to Kāinga Ora's consultation on information to be released. As I've said in the House, on 3 August, as soon as I read the Official Information Act request and the documents that came through to my office, I sent an email to the organisation. My reason for contacting the Public Service Commission today is that responses to media queries over the last 24 hours by the agency suggest to me they're not taking the matter as seriously as it needs to be.

**Brooke van Velden:** How can New Zealanders have faith in the culture of Kāinga Ora, when part of its half-million - dollar deal for advertorial content was arranged publication of a future Labour Party candidate that senior staff knew about?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS:** The public can have faith in Kāinga Ora, not only because it is delivering on housing for New Zealanders but also, as I indicated in the answer to the primary question, that the chair of Kāinga Ora, Vui Mark Gosche, has made it clear that what has happened is wrong, it cannot happen again, and it is the board's responsibility to ensure that it does not happen again.

**Brooke van Velden:** What does it say of the standards of this Government if she won't hold an inquiry but simply writes a letter, and can she describe what actions she would find unacceptable enough for her to open an inquiry?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS:** What it says about this Government is that when we proactively see a problem, we take action on it. On 3 August, I wrote to Kāinga Ora exercising my ministerial duty to make it clear that the behaviour and conduct was well short of my expectations. Furthermore, when I saw responses to media queries over the last 24-hour period that I felt were not of the standard that I expected, I did contact the Public Service Commission and asked them for some advice.

**Nicola Willis:** What responsibility does she take for allowing a culture to emerge at Kāinga Ora that made this sort of unethical conduct acceptable not only to a senior communications adviser but to a general manager?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS:** I take my responsibilities very seriously and that's exactly why I wrote to the organisation on 3 August, making it clear that this was well short of my expectations as the responsible Minister. It is exactly why I raised the matter with the chief executive. It's exactly why I raised the matter with the chair of the board.

## • Question No. 9—Housing

**9. NICOLA WILLIS (National) to the Minister of Housing:** How did she make it clear to Kāinga Ora that she is "not comfortable with them using political candidates" in their advertising, and what actions have been taken by Kāinga Ora to address her concerns?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS (Minister of Housing):** As outlined in my answer to question No. 1 from the ACT Party earlier today, on 3 August, my office wrote an email to Kāinga Ora outlining my concerns with the conduct reflected in the information released under the Official Information Act. I'm advised that at the time, the face-to-face meeting was held with the staff member involved, who was reminded of their obligations under the Public Service code of conduct. Again, as outlined in my answer to question No. 1, I have also discussed the matter with the chair of Kāinga Ora, who was clear that what has happened was wrong and is committed to ensuring it never happens again. Finally, again, as outlined in the answer to question No. 1 today, as a belts and braces approach, I've asked the Public Service Commission for some advice on whether anything further needs to be done.

**Nicola Willis:** Why did her office wait until August to convey this displeasure, when documents released to me show she first asked for clarification about this matter on 23 June?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS:** It was on 2 August that my office received a bundle of documents that would be released by the agency under Official Information Act requests, that was the back and forth correspondence within the agency about the article that appeared on *OneRoof*. My discomfort was with the way it was dealt with, in particular the way that there was a suggestion that we could un-know about something that had happened. That is exactly what I conveyed to the organisation within 12 hours of reading those documents.

**Nicola Willis:** What follow-up, if any, did she do following the token email her—

**SPEAKER:** Order! Order! Right, the member knows that's not in order, doesn't she? Right, well, she's used a supplementary.

**Nicola Willis:** Ah, Mr Speaker, point of order. I don't think my question was out of order. I think that I could have—

**SPEAKER:** No, you'll now resume your seat. I asked the member whether she knew that it was out of order. She nodded her head to confirm that she did. You can't be right both ways.

**Nicola Willis:** What follow-up, if any, did she do following the email her office sent in August to ensure Kāinga Ora had done anything to address the grossly unprofessional conduct that had occurred; and isn't it the case that precisely nothing has changed at Kāinga Ora since she sent her email?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS:** I think, actually, I've covered what follow-up has occurred over numerous answers that I've given in the House today. The email was sent on 3 August. I raised it at a meeting with officials, both with Kāinga Ora but also with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, who is the monitoring agency for Kāinga Ora. I have subsequently spoken to the chief executive again, I have spoken to the chair, and I have asked for advice from the Public Service Commission.

**Nicola Willis:** Does she consider that Kāinga Ora takes her as Minister seriously, when in the past 24 hours, a senior communications adviser has released grossly misleading statements to the media claiming that a Kāinga Ora staff member made a personal judgment call on this matter, when there is documentary proof a general manager signed it off?

**Hon Dr MEGAN WOODS:** Yes, I do have confidence that this matter is being taken seriously, and that my expectations as Minister are being taken seriously.

Many thanks

Rach



## Rachel Kelly (she/her)

Manager, Government Relations  
Governance

Mobile: s9(2)(a)

Email: rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz

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**From:** Nick Maling  
**Sent:** Friday, 12 November 2021 2:56 PM  
**To:** Marie Winfield  
**Subject:** Re: Public Service Commission draft media statement

Just check we are all looking at the same doc. The version you sent me before of their statement referred to investigating.

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**From:** Marie Winfield <Marie.Winfield@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Friday, November 12, 2021 2:54:51 PM  
**To:** Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Nick Maling <Nick.Maling@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** Re: Public Service Commission draft media statement

No problem - their statement refers to it as an investigation but we can keep it simple. Here is an updated version.

“Kāinga Ora welcomes the decision today by the Public Services Commissioner. We will be fully cooperating with the process. We are unable to provide any further information until after the Commissioner’s work is completed.”

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**From:** Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Friday, November 12, 2021 2:48:34 PM  
**To:** Nick Maling <Nick.Maling@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Marie Winfield <Marie.Winfield@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** Re: Public Service Commission draft media statement

Hi all

I agree with Nicks comment – Peter Hughes emphasised that point to me.

I will call when I am free Marie.

Thanks

Andrew

Andrew McKenzie

---

**From:** Nick Maling <Nick.Maling@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Friday, November 12, 2021 2:13:49 PM  
**To:** Marie Winfield <Marie.Winfield@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** Re: Public Service Commission draft media statement

Marie, can we please not refer to it as a investigation in our response. Can we just talking about PSC investigating. Thanks

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**From:** Marie Winfield <Marie.Winfield@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Friday, November 12, 2021 2:08:38 PM  
**To:** Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Cc:** Nick Maling <Nick.Maling@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** FW: Public Service Commission draft media statement

Hi Andrew

I will give you a call about this – but just wanted you to see the statement that PSC will be releasing at 4pm today.

We will receive queries asking for us to comment – I suggest we keep our response very simple “Kāinga Ora welcomes the decision today by the Public Services Commissioner to carry out an investigation, which we will be fully cooperating with. We are unable to provide any further information until after the Commissioner's investigation is completed.”

Talk soon  
Marie

**From:** Grahame Armstrong <Grahame.Armstrong@publicservice.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Friday, 12 November 2021 2:00 PM  
**To:** Marie Winfield <Marie.Winfield@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** Public Service Commission draft media statement

Hi Marie

Fyi, I've attached a copy of a media statement the Commissioner will be issuing at 4pm.

Happy to discuss.

Regards  
Grahame

**Grahame Armstrong**  
**Principal Media Advisor**

waea pūkoro: 021 940 457 | **īmēra:** [grahame.armstrong@publicservice.govt.nz](mailto:grahame.armstrong@publicservice.govt.nz)



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**Te Kawa Mataaho**  
Public Service Commission

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

12 November 2021

## **Public Service Commissioner investigating Kāinga Ora matters**

Public Service Commissioner Peter Hughes is investigating matters that have been raised in relation to the public housing agency Kāinga Ora.

“We need to look into what has happened here and why,” said Mr Hughes.

“Political neutrality and trustworthiness are bottom lines for the Public Service. The matters that have been raised go to trust and confidence in a key public service agency.”

Mr Hughes will not be commenting further until he has finished investigating.

*Ends*

**Media queries:** *Grahame Armstrong: 021 940 457.*

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

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**From:** Willow Lovell  
**Sent:** Friday, 12 November 2021 2:59 PM  
**To:** Andrew McKenzie  
**Subject:** PLEASE REVIEW - Public Service Commission draft media statement - added into panui

Hi,

Are you ok with the wording below – (after release has gone out).

**Te Kawa Mataaho - Public Service Commission investigation**

You would have seen the recent media coverage regarding a Kāinga Ora advertorial last year featuring a current Labour MP, who was at the time a candidate. We have had confirmation today that Te Kawa Mataaho will be investigating this matter. We welcome this investigation and will cooperate fully with Te Kawa Mataaho.

Willow

**From:** Grahame Armstrong <[Grahame.Armstrong@publicservice.govt.nz](mailto:Grahame.Armstrong@publicservice.govt.nz)>  
**Sent:** Friday, 12 November 2021 2:00 PM  
**To:** Marie Winfield <[Marie.Winfield@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:Marie.Winfield@kaingaora.govt.nz)>  
**Subject:** Public Service Commission draft media statement

Hi Marie

Fyi, I've attached a copy of a media statement the Commissioner will be issuing at 4pm.

Happy to discuss.

Regards  
Grahame

**Grahame Armstrong**  
**Principal Media Advisor**

waea pūkoro: 021 940 457 | imēra: [grahame.armstrong@publicservice.govt.nz](mailto:grahame.armstrong@publicservice.govt.nz)




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 Re: Hi Marie - can you give me a quick call please? Grahame 021 940 457

Sent: November 12, 2021 3:33 PM

From: Marie Winfield

To: Grahame Armstrong;

 6 Attachments

 image006.jpg (13 KB);  image007.gif (85 KB);  image008.png (1 KB);  image009.png (1 KB);  image010.png (1 KB);  image011.png (4 KB);

Hi Grahame  
Here is our holding statement.  
Marie

Kāinga Ora welcomes the decision today by the Public Services Commissioner. We will be fully cooperating with the process. We are unable to provide any further information until after the Commissioner's work is completed.

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

---

**From:** Marie Winfield  
**Sent:** Friday, November 12, 2021 1:51:10 PM  
**To:** Grahame Armstrong <Grahame.Armstrong@publicservice.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** RE: Hi Marie - can you give me a quick call please? Grahame 021 940 457

Hi Grahame  
I understand you want to chat about a statement. I'll await your call – but if you can give me some idea of timing for that I would really appreciate it.

Thanks  
Marie

## Marie Winfield

Director of Communications  
National Services

Mobile:   
Email: [marie.winfield@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:marie.winfield@kaingaora.govt.nz)

---

Freephone: 0800 801 601 | Mainline: (04) 439 3000 | Kāinga Ora - Homes and Communities  
PO BOX 2628 Wellington 6140 | New Zealand Government | [www.kaingaora.govt.nz](http://www.kaingaora.govt.nz)

**From:** Grahame Armstrong <Grahame.Armstrong@publicservice.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 10 November 2021 5:03 PM  
**To:** Marie Winfield <Marie.Winfield@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** Hi Marie - can you give me a quick call please? Grahame 021 940 457

You don't often get email from [grahame.armstrong@publicservice.govt.nz](mailto:grahame.armstrong@publicservice.govt.nz). [Learn why this is important](#)

**Grahame Armstrong**  
**Principal Media Advisor**

**waea pūkoro:** 021 940 457 | **īmēra:** [grahame.armstrong@publicservice.govt.nz](mailto:grahame.armstrong@publicservice.govt.nz)

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Hi David

As discussed, here's the PSC statement which is being published at 4pm – I do not know if it's being proactively sent to media (but assume so).

Here's our holding statement, attributed to the CE:

**Kāinga Ora welcomes the decision today by the Public Service Commissioner. We will be fully cooperating with the process. We are unable to provide any further information until after the Commissioner's work is completed.**

Cheers

#### **MEDIA STATEMENT**

12 November 2021

## **Public Service Commissioner investigating Kāinga Ora matters**

**Public Service Commissioner Peter Hughes is investigating matters that have been raised in relation to the public housing agency Kāinga Ora.**

“We need to look into what has happened here and why,” said Mr Hughes.

“Political neutrality and trustworthiness are bottom lines for the Public Service. The matters that have been raised go to trust and confidence in a key public service agency.”

Mr Hughes will not be commenting further until he has finished investigating.

*Ends*

*Media queries: Grahame Armstrong: 021 940 457.*

### **Martyn Watterson**

Manager Corporate Communications and  
Media  
National Services Group

Mobile: s9(2)(a)

Email: martyn.watterson@kaingaora.govt.nz

---

**From:** Sharon Girvan  
**Sent:** Friday, 12 November 2021 4:19 PM  
**To:** Rowan Macrae  
**Cc:** Al Witcombe; Rachel Kelly  
**Subject:** FW: Letter from Peter Hughes  
**Attachments:** Letter to Hon Vui Mark Gosche.pdf; Media statement.docx

fyi

**From:** Mark Gosche <Mark.Gosche@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Friday, 12 November 2021 4:10 PM  
**To:** Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Robin Hapi <Robin.Hapi@kaingaora.govt.nz>; John Duncan <John\_1.Duncan@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Cc:** Gov Admin <GovAdmin@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Sharon Girvan <Sharon.Girvan@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Letter from Peter Hughes

Board correspondence just received  
Vui

---

**From:** Toni Vincent <s9(2)(a)>  
**Sent:** Friday, November 12, 2021 3:51 PM  
**To:** Mark Gosche  
**Subject:** Letter from Peter Hughes

You don't often get email from s9(2)(a) [Learn why this is important](#)  
Good afternoon,

Please see attached letter from Peter Hughes, Public Service Commissioner.

Kind regards,  
Toni

**Toni Vincent** (she/her)

**Kaiwhakahaere | Executive Manager to Peter Hughes, Public Service Commissioner**

Te Tari a Te Tumu Whakarae mō Te Kawa Mataaho, Upoko Ratonga | Office of the Public Service Commissioner, Head of Service

waea pūkoro: s9(2)(a) | imēra: s9(2)(a)



**Te Kawa Mataaho**  
Public Service Commission

Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission

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**Te Kawa Mataaho**  
Public Service Commission

12 November 2021

Hon Vui Mark Gosche  
Chair  
Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities  
PO Box 2628  
Wellington

By email: [mark.gosche@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:mark.gosche@kaingaora.govt.nz)

Dear Vui

Yesterday the Minister of Housing raised with me matters relating to Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities' recent handling of the internal communications regarding an article that appeared on oneroof.co.nz in 2020.

Separately, Nicola Willis MP has written to me to raise her concerns.

I am writing to advise you that I will be investigating these matters.

Political neutrality and trustworthiness are bottom lines for the Public Service. The issues that have been raised go to trust and confidence in a key public service agency. In my role as Public Service Commissioner, I have responsibility for integrity and conduct in the Public Service. Kāinga Ora falls within my jurisdiction in that regard.

I will write to you early next week setting out the process for investigating these matters and the support I will need from your agency.

Given the public interest in the matters raised, I will shortly be issuing the attached media statement.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Peter Hughes (he/him)  
Te Tumu Whakarāe mō Te Kawa Mataaho  
Public Service Commissioner | Head of Service

cc: Mr Andrew Crisp, Secretary for Housing and Urban Development, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development

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**Te Kawa Mataaho**  
Public Service Commission

MEDIA STATEMENT

12 November 2021

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“Political neutrality and trustworthiness are bottom lines for the Public Service. The matters that have been raised go to trust and confidence in a key public service agency.”

Mr Hughes will not be commenting further until he has finished investigating.

*Ends*

**Media queries:** *Grahame Armstrong: 021 940 457.*

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**From:** Vikki Carter  
**Sent:** Friday, 12 November 2021 4:21 PM  
**To:** Media Notification; Media Responses  
**Subject:** FW: Comment on PSC investigation

Going back to s9(2)(a) our statement

Kāinga Ora welcomes the decision today by the Public Service Commissioner. We will be fully cooperating with the process. We are unable to provide any further information until after the Commissioner's work is completed.

**From:** s9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Friday, 12 November 2021 4:18 PM  
**To:** Media Enquiries <MediaEnquiries@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** Comment on PSC investigation

Hi there,

I'm keen to get some comment on the PSC investigation.

Cheers,

s9(2)(a)

---  
s9(2)(a)  
Chief Political Reporter  
M: s9(2)(a)  
Stuff, Press Gallery, Parliament Buildings room G-045,

[Stuff.co.nz](http://stuff.co.nz) | [The Dominion Post](http://www.thedominionpost.co.nz)



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**From:** Nita McFadzean  
**Sent:** Monday, 15 November 2021 5:52 AM  
**To:** Anna Kenny  
**Cc:** Justin Te Rangiita; Rowan Macrae  
**Subject:** RE: Letter from Peter Hughes

Morning Anna

Can we confirm our people that we need to provide support to – can you loop in with Sharon to identify who we are supporting. We will need to see the TOR before and discuss approach with Ro.

Nita

**From:** Rowan Macrae <Rowan.Macrae@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Friday, 12 November 2021 4:41 PM  
**To:** Nita McFadzean <Nita.McFadzean@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Justin Te Rangiita <Justin.TeRangiita@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Cc:** Syl Shamy <Sylvester.Shamy@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** FW: Letter from Peter Hughes

FYI Both.

Rachel is assembling a timeline of events from a GRU perspective.

Copying you Syl as this is likely to be discussed in the upcoming FRAC.

Nita, as discussed can we please ensure we offer EAP (or other as appropriate) to the team member/s concerned as this will be extremely stressful for them.

I'll revert as soon as I see the ToR so we know what other interim action we may be required to take by the PSC.

Thanks  
Ro

**From:** Sharon Girvan <Sharon.Girvan@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Friday, 12 November 2021 4:19 PM  
**To:** Rowan Macrae <Rowan.Macrae@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Cc:** Al Witcombe <Al.Witcombe@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Rachel Kelly <rachel.kelly@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** FW: Letter from Peter Hughes

fyi

**From:** Mark Gosche <Mark.Gosche@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
**Sent:** Friday, 12 November 2021 4:10 PM  
**To:** Andrew McKenzie <Andrew.McKenzie@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Robin Hapi <Robin.Hapi@kaingaora.govt.nz>; John Duncan <John.1.Duncan@kaingaora.govt.nz>



Cc: Gov Admin <GovAdmin@kaingaora.govt.nz>; Sharon Girvan <Sharon.Girvan@kaingaora.govt.nz>  
Subject: Fwd: Letter from Peter Hughes

Board correspondence just received  
Vui

---

**From:** Toni Vincent [s9(2)(a)]  
**Sent:** Friday, November 12, 2021 3:51 PM  
**To:** Mark Gosche  
**Subject:** Letter from Peter Hughes

You don't often get email from [s9(2)(a)] [Learn why this is important](#)

Good afternoon,

Please see attached letter from Peter Hughes, Public Service Commissioner.

Kind regards,  
Toni

**Toni Vincent** (she/her)  
**Kaiwhakahaere | Executive Manager to Peter Hughes, Public Service Commissioner**  
Te Tari a Te Tumu Whakarae mō Te Kawa Mataaho, Upoko Ratonga | Office of the Public Service Commissioner, Head of Service  
waea pūkoro: [s(9)(2)(a)] | imēra: [s9(2)(a)]



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# Your role in this year's General Election

- Page published: 10 Jun 2020
- Page updated: 06 Jul 2021

Know your rights and role in the upcoming election.

On 17 August 2020, the Prime Minister announced that the general election will be moved from 19 September 2020 to 17 October 2020, to ensure that a safe and accessible election is achievable, given the change in COVID-19 alert levels. Please note that the pre-election period has already commenced, following the dissolution of Parliament on 6 September 2020, which means we need to follow the official advice from the Public Service Commission until 17 October 2020. With the election just over a month away, it's timely to remind each other of our rights and what to be aware of as we go about our day to day work.

## We have rights and freedoms like all New Zealanders

As public servants we have the same rights to freedom of speech and political activity in our private lives as other New Zealanders. We also need to be aware of how we exercise these rights in balance with remaining politically neutral (External site) in our work.

During the election period, we need to take extra care in our workplace and on social media to maintain the political neutrality of our roles.

## How we can all do the right thing

The State Services Commission have produced fresh guidelines to help us understand in more detail what is expected of us pre-election, during the election and post-election.

The new guidelines take into account COVID-19 and that we are operating still in different times – they also offer help on election-related issues and preparing for an election as a government agency.

Together, we all have a role to play in ensuring the integrity of our electoral process and throughout the election period, we need to be mindful of what this means.

In its simplest form, the guidelines come back to doing the right thing at the right time and knowing how this translates in practice to the work we will be doing during the election period.

## Guidelines available in full on the Public Service Commission Website

You are encouraged to read the guidelines on the Public Services Commission (PSC) External site) website so you can get a full understanding of what they may mean for you personally.

The guidance is set up in an easy to read format so you can draw on key information.

- Sections 1-4 focuses on the workings of the State Services
- Sections 5-6 covers the different parts of the election process
- Section 7 provides specific guidance for:
  - advertising, publicity and media, and
  - information requests and releases.



*The election period has begun, so learn your rights and what to be aware of.*

## Election 2020 - Frequently Asked Questions

On 17 August 2020, the Prime Minister announced that the general election will be moved to 17 October 2020 to ensure that a safe and accessible election is achievable. Please note that the pre-election period has already commenced, following the dissolution of Parliament on 6 September 2020.

### Media & OIAs

#### 1. Am I still able to make statements to the media in my official capacity during this period?

- Yes. If part of your role is to give comment to the media, you can continue to do so. These statements must be strictly factual and impartial.

#### 2. How should I manage Official Information Act (OIA) requests during this period?

- The Official Information Act 1982 has an important role in ensuring the government of the day and its agencies are transparent and accountable to the general public.
- Official information should continue to be released in a timely manner to enable a well-informed electorate.
- As always, state servants must not become involved in assessing the political consequences of releasing information.

### Tenant rights

#### 3. Can Kāinga Ora tenants host election hoardings/signage at their property?

- Tenants can, if they wish, place political hoardings/signage at their Kāinga Ora tenancies, but they must not be attached to the building itself.
- The exception to this is if the hoarding/signage is not located at an individual tenancy. Any political signage placed at a Kāinga Ora complex or block of flats must be removed.
- Tenants should also consult their local territorial authority before installing any hoardings to ensure it complies with local bylaws.
- All political hoardings/signage must be removed before election day.

### Staff rights

#### 4. Am I allowed to participate in the political process during the election period?

- Yes. You can be politically active during the election in a personal capacity. However, as state servants we must keep our jobs out of our politics and our politics out of our jobs.

#### 5. Can I express my political views on social media?

- Yes, as long as your activity does not undermine the political neutrality of the Kāinga Ora and the wider state services.
- For example, state servants must not link their personal political comments to their LinkedIn work profile or refer to their work or employer in their comments.
- There must be a clear separation between state servants' work role and their personal use of media.

## Kāinga Ora site visits

### 6. Can Ministers, Members of Parliament or candidates in the general election attend Kāinga Ora sites (ie a building site) during the election period?

- During this period, the business of government continues and this may include, for example, the opening of new developments. That means Housing Ministers will continue to attend these events as part of business as usual.
- Particular care is needed around ceremonial events to avoid perceptions of being associated with any political aspects of such events, particularly if candidates are attending the events with Ministers.

## Advertising

### 7. Can Kāinga Ora advertise its services during the election period?

- During the election period, state servants must be alert to the heightened political sensitivity around government advertising and any perceived risk that government funds are being used to pay for publicity for political parties.

## Follow up questions

### 8. If I'm still not sure about things, where can I go for more guidance?

- Contact your Government Relations team at Kāinga Ora: [mb-grujobs@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:mb-grujobs@kaingaora.govt.nz)

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# Public Service Commission Standards of Integrity and Conduct

The Public Service Commission Standards of Integrity and Conduct applies to Public Service departments and Crown Entities.

120 organisations and 190,000 people that make up the State sector are required to comply with minimum standards of integrity and conduct set out in the code. Ultimately this means that all the agencies and staff sharing responsibility to serve New Zealanders act with the **spirit of service**.

The Standards of Integrity and Conduct supersedes the Public Service Code of Conduct - the behaviour that is expected under the new code is no different from before. The values implicit in that code are enduring. What has changed is the way they are expressed.

The PSC Standards of Integrity and Conduct state that we must be **fair, impartial, responsible** and **trustworthy**.

## Fair

We must:

- treat everyone fairly and with respect
- be professional and responsive
- work to make government services accessible and effective
- strive to make a difference to the well-being of New Zealand and all its people.

## Impartial

We must:

- maintain the political neutrality required to enable us to work with current and future governments
- carry out the functions of our organisation, unaffected by our personal beliefs
- support our organisation to provide robust and unbiased advice
- respect the authority of the government of the day.

## Responsible

We must:

- act lawfully and objectively
- use our organisation's resources carefully and only for intended purposes
- treat information with care and use it only for proper purposes
- work to improve the performance and efficiency of our organisation.

## Trustworthy

We must:

- be honest
- work to the best of our abilities
- ensure our actions are not affected by our personal interests or relationships
- never misuse our position for personal gain
- decline gifts or benefits that place us under any obligation or perceived influence
- avoid any activities, work or non-work, that may harm the reputation of Kāinga Ora or of the Public Service Commission.

Kāinga Ora foundation documents values and behaviours, and customer philosophy provide the framework for what is expected of us as staff - these all support the PSC Standards of Integrity and Conduct.

*Remember: "There is no such thing as a small lapse in integrity" - Tom Peters*

**From:**  
**Sent:**  
**Subject:**

From The Executive Team  
Friday, 19 June 2020 5:09 PM  
Leadership Update



## Leadership Update

### General Election

Today marks the start of the election period. Read [Atamai](#) to understand what this means for you and your work.

*Mā pango, mā whero ka oti te mahi* – through cooperation and everyone working together the work will be done.

Ngā manaakitanga

Kāinga Ora Leadership Team

## Leaders update 4 September 2020

Page published: 04 Sep 2020

Page updated: 04 Sep 2020

### Your role in this year's General Election

With this year's election day rescheduled for 17 October it's timely to remind each other of what to be aware of as we go about our day to day work.

Te Kawa Mataaho (the Public Service Commission) have produced [guidelines](#) (which take into account COVID-19) to help us understand in more detail what is expected of us as public servants pre-election, during the election and post-election, and preparing for an election as a government agency.

**From:** Business Alerts <[BusinessAlerts@kaingaora.govt.nz](mailto:BusinessAlerts@kaingaora.govt.nz)>

**Sent:** Thursday, 11 November 2021 4:57 PM

**Subject:** Expressing a personal view



## Expressing a personal view All our people

In light of Andrew McKenzie's presentation last week on COVID-19, we want to ensure we keep our people safe, respect each other, and continue to adhere to the PSC Standards of Integrity and Conduct.

### Public Service Commission –Standards of Integrity and Conduct

As Public Servants, we must comply with the standards of integrity and conduct set out for us, which is to be **fair, impartial, responsible and trustworthy**.

If you have any questions about this, or what is required from us in our roles at Kāinga Ora, please refer to the [PSC – Standards of Integrity and Conduct](#)

You can also refer to Atamai for an [explanation of the standards](#).

### Why is this important?

As a Crown Entity, we are in the public service. In the current environment the issues around COVID-19, and the approach on vaccination is really polarising for many New Zealanders. A key part of that is ensuring that our people show that we act in the interests of New Zealand and its citizens, and never for personal gain.

### Personal views

As a person, we will all have our individual views, and rights to our personal opinions, however we need to consider the views of others and remember what the PSC Standards of Integrity and Conduct require from all public service employees.

### Remaining impartial on a public level

Impartiality includes maintaining political neutrality and carrying out the functions of our organisation, unaffected by our personal beliefs.

If you want to express a personal view in the public arena that does not meet this criteria, such as on the COVID-19 response, for example at an event or on social media, please remember to remove anything that identifies you as a Kāinga Ora employee. Likewise, if out in public, please ensure you remove your lanyards or any Kāinga Ora branded clothing.

### Respect and treating each other fairly

From a values approach, it is also important that our personal views are not to judge others in our Kāinga Ora whanau or our wider community; everyone is entitled to their own personal view. If you hear someone has a contrary view to yours then treat them with Manaakitanga and respect.