

WELLINGTON

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PROTECTING NEW ZEALAND'S BORDER

17 September 2019

Ref: OIA 19 - 215

[REDACTED]

By email: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Request for information under the Official Information Act

Thank you for your email dated 25 August 2019 to the New Zealand Customs Service (Customs), in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

"Please provide information you hold regarding policies or guidance that assist Private Secretaries to fulfil their roles and duties in Ministers' Offices."

Customs has identified a process document dated 15 June 2011, which outlines the policies and guidelines for the Customs Private Secretary that were relevant in 2011. However, as this document is now out-of-date and not currently accurate, Customs believes it would be of little value to you. Instead, we are providing you with a copy of the current position description for the Private Secretary to the Minister of Customs.

The policies and guidelines document for the Customs Private Secretary is currently being updated. Customs would be happy to provide you with a copy of this updated version in the near future, if that would be helpful. Please let us know if you would like a copy of the updated policies and guidelines once it has been updated by emailing OIA@customs.govt.nz.

If you have any other queries about this response, please contact the Correspondence, Reviews and Ministerial Servicing Team: OIA@customs.govt.nz.

Please note that Customs proactively releases responses to Official Information Act requests on our website. As such, we may publish this response on our website after we have sent it to you. Your name and contact details will be removed.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Anna Cook
Director Policy



NEW ZEALAND
CUSTOMS SERVICE
TE MANA ĀRAI O AOTEAROA

PROTECTING NEW ZEALAND'S BORDER

POSITION DESCRIPTION PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER

Designation:	Private Secretary to the Minister
Location:	Office of the Minister of Customs, Wellington
Group:	Policy
Reports to:	Manager Correspondence, Reviews and Ministerial Servicing
Tenure:	Secondment (period to be determined)
Issue date:	July 2016

THE POLICY GROUP

The Policy Group provides high quality advice to Government, the Minister of Customs, the Comptroller of Customs, other Government agencies, and the senior leadership team in Customs on policy and international issues.

The Policy Group undertakes a range of activities, including developing and interpreting policy advice, monitoring and evaluating policy performance and its translation into operational practice, providing ministerial servicing, negotiating trade agreements, and reviewing complaints to achieve the Government's objectives of:

- border protection
- trade access and facilitation
- travel facilitation
- efficient revenue collection at the border, and
- maintenance of international border connections.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the role of the Private Secretary to the Minister is to ensure that the Minister is well briefed in a timely and effective manner on all Customs matters and is provided with an efficient executive support service. The role involves:

- offering initial advice on relevant matters to the Minister's Senior Private Secretary and the Private Secretary Media
- acting as the link between the Ministers' Office and the Ministerial Senior Advisors in Customs when providing Cabinet Office and other information.
- Ensuring that the Comptroller is fully briefed at all times in respect of the Ministers' Customs Portfolio
- taking minutes of meetings; processing correspondence
- dealing with Customs-related enquiries (often from other Ministers' offices)
- shepherding papers to the Minister from Customs (and through the Cabinet Office process when applicable)
- arranging meetings, appointments and events for the Minister.

The Private Secretary has a key role to play in maintaining the relationship between and the confidence of both the Office of the Minister of Customs and the Comptroller of Customs. The Private Secretary must work in close collaboration with Customs officials, other Government agencies and key stakeholders to support the Minister's and the Government's portfolio objectives.

The Private Secretary is expected to liaise with other Minister's offices and work in with the other portfolio staff in the Minister's office.

Value-added activities include providing advice on draft Cabinet papers and Customs' reports to the Minister, alerting the Minister and Customs to emerging issues for the department and the Minister. Also facilitating communications between the Comptroller and the Minister at all times.

ACCOUNTABILITIES

The Private Secretary to the Minister is accountable to the Manager Correspondence, Reviews and Ministerial Servicing for:

Key results area	Accountabilities
Contribute to the provision of timely high quality policy advice and administrative support to the Minister, Senior Private Secretary and Media Private Secretary	<p>Ensuring, but not directly responsible for, the quality of reporting and all papers to the Minister meet the required standards in terms of timeliness, presentation, style, quality of analysis and clarity</p> <p>Ensuring, but not directly responsible for, Identifying risks and opportunities in the Customs portfolio area to enable the Minister to act with confidence</p> <p>Providing high quality strategic advice from Customs to the Minister on Government goals and direction, including advice on the implications of policy formulated by other Ministers</p> <p>Monitoring issues and ensuring commitments and timeframes are met</p>
Contribute to the maintenance and further development of the relationship between Customs and the Minister so Customs can take a leading role in formulating whole of Government strategies for border management	<p>Ensuring Customs is aware of and can contribute to Ministerial thinking</p> <p>Facilitating and coordinating the papers provided for the Minister in a timely manner</p> <p>Identifying opportunities, such as attendance at events, to strengthen relationships between Customs and the Minister</p> <p>Identifying opportunities to strengthen relationships between the Minister and other Government agencies.</p>
Contributing to the achievement of Customs' outcomes	<p>Making realistic and relevant connections between one's own work, the work of Customs and broader contexts</p> <p>Keeping relevant Policy Group members informed of issues.</p>

Develop a strategic overview of the Minister's requirements, facilitate the coordination of these with other Customs' activities such as international and domestic visits	<p>Brief appropriate Customs personnel on Minister's requirements and level of awareness.</p> <p>Ensure that Customs response all times meets Ministerial expectations</p> <p>Contribute to development of visit programmes and briefings.</p>
Work with a high degree of autonomy and self-management, while ensuring consistency and alignment with other Customs work groups	<p>Proactively building and sustaining strong collaborative relationships within Customs and with relevant agencies</p> <p>Working as an effective team member and contributing to the development of an effective and supportive team environment in order to achieve collective and organisational goals</p> <p>Keeping up to date with and applying specialist knowledge and technical skills, through continuous self-development and effective personal work practices.</p>
Contribute to the good public image of Customs by providing an approachable and helpful interface with other Ministers, Private Secretaries, MPs, Parliamentary Services staff, industry group representatives and members of the public	<p>Deal with e-mails, correspondence and phone-calls from members of the Public (which are normally in relation to a complaint)</p> <p>Manage relationships over issues of interest with other parties that are often complex, politically sensitive and occasionally involve conflict.</p>
Work closely and collaborate with the other portfolio private secretaries in the Minister's office	<p>Ensure that cover is maintained in the Minister's office during question time in the House and at other times as required.</p> <p>Be prepared to consider possible learnings from the processes that the other portfolio private secretaries follow.</p>

Performance management

In this role you will be expected to meet specific performance standards. These standards will be defined in an individual performance plan, and generally will reflect your contribution to achieving the Unit's objectives and measures.

AUTHORITIES

Decision making and delegations

The Private Secretary to the Minister is required to self-manage and therefore needs to acquire and maintain a thorough knowledge of the New Zealand Customs Service. All decisions made

by, and actions of the Private Secretary to the Minister are expected to be lawful, with delegated authorities exercised in accord with current legislation and policy. Decisions and actions must be consistent with the Customs' Code of Conduct. Delegated authority will be agreed with The Manager Correspondence, Reviews and Ministerial Servicing.

Financial

Not applicable

Staff

Not applicable

Budget/resource management

Not applicable

RELATIONSHIPS

This is a role of influence both within Customs and externally. The incumbent is required to consult others and develop strategic relationships with key influencers both within and outside the Minister's office.

INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comptroller• Senior Leaders in Customs• The Manager Correspondence, Reviews and Ministerial Servicing• Policy Group• Communications Group• Managers and staff in other parts of the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minister• Senior Private Secretary• Media Private Secretary and staff in the Minister's Office• The Cabinet Office• Private Secretaries in Offices of other Ministers• Private sector agencies• Public Sector agencies• Client groups both national and overseas

PERSON SPECIFICATION

To be successful as the Private Secretary to the Minister, the appointee requires the following knowledge, experience, skills and personal attributes:

Essential

- Demonstrable experience in building and maintaining strong and diverse relationships.
- The ability to work the hours that are considered "normal" in the Minister's office. This usually entails starting at approximately 0830 and working until 1800 during the weeks

when the House is sitting. Sometimes it is necessary to work later to support the Minister at certain meetings and events. For this reason a location allowance is paid in recognition of these hours of work.

- The ability to prioritize work load, tasks and activities (from hour to hour if necessary).
- An eye for detail to enable error-free processing of documents, information and communications.
- The ability to manage follow ups to ensure deadlines are met.
- The ability to understand technical and legislative compliance and the associated non compliance risks.
- The ability to learn about (or have experience of) working in a ministerial and parliamentary environment and knowledge of parliamentary processes.
- Some knowledge or understanding of the wide range of legislation applicable to the Customs environment.
- A good understanding or knowledge of the New Zealand Customs Services operations.
- Be able to provide a high level of quality assurance on all documentation and processes with attention to timeliness and detail.
- A demonstrated broad understanding of Customs' mission and desired vision, strategy and policy outcomes; or the ability to quickly come to that understanding.
- Some knowledge, skills and abilities regarding the development of policies and procedures in a Customs' environment.
- Be able to consistently apply knowledge and experience and be a source of guidance regarding matters pertaining to the Minister.
- Demonstrable high quality written and verbal communication skills.
- Security Clearance to "Top Secret" level or the ability to obtain.
- A tertiary qualification in a relevant discipline or demonstrable equivalent intellectual capability.

COMPETENCIES

Core competencies

Approachability

Builds rapport well and is warm, pleasant and gracious in their contact with others. Is easy to approach and makes an extra effort to be patient with the interpersonal anxieties of others and put them at ease.

Peer Relationships

Is a team player who is focused on being cooperative and collaborative with others, and who honestly represents his/her own opinions in a way that is fair to others. Quickly seeks to find common ground and solutions to problems for the benefit of all.

Listening

Consistently practices attentive and active listening and demonstrates an ability to accurately reflect the opinions of others even when there is disagreement. Demonstrates tolerance with people and processes by listening, checking, and understanding information before making judgements or acting.

Political Savvy

Is sensitive to how people and organisations functions, views office politics as the reality of organisational life and plans accordingly. Is able to anticipate problems, works effectively and quietly to progress matters.

Conflict management

Is able to read situations quickly; stick with tough conversations and situations with the intention of settling disputes equitably. Responds to conflict by listening, searching for common ground, and gains cooperation with minimal friction.

Self knowledge

Has insight into own personal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and limits, and demonstrates an ability to employ various skills and approaches in different situations when necessary. Seeks balanced feedback from others through formal and informal discussions and makes an effort learn from mistakes to assist ongoing development.

Decision quality

Utilises a mixture of analysis, wisdom, experience, and judgment to make high quality, timely decisions, and produce ideas and solutions which are pragmatic and workable. Assists others to make decisions by giving advice and offering solutions, and can use his/her time efficiently to make effective decisions even when information is complex, incomplete, or there are time pressures.

Action orientated

Enjoys being busy and is full of energy for situations and experiences which are challenging for him/her. Is intellectually sharp and is not fearful of acting when necessary, seizing opportunities as they present themselves.