

17 May 2023

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OIA 28596

Personal details removed
for proactive release

Tēnā koe Personal details removed for proactive rele

On 18 April 2023 you requested the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), in two separate emails:

I hereby request Cabinet briefings (in full) relating to the United States' recognition of Cook Islands and Niue as "sovereign states" (first reported in September 2022) and the relevant background to issue.

I hereby request official information with regards to the following passages in the article Vernon Small and Simon Day, "Cook Islands push for independence from NZ", Stuff, 30 May 2015 (<https://www.stuff.co.nz/world/south-pacific/68986939/cook-islands-push-for-independence-from-nz>), that relate to New Zealand's consideration of international opinion regarding the full independence of the Cook Islands while retaining New Zealand citizenship:

- a. "[I]t [could] be interpreted as a grab by New Zealand for an extra seat at the UN".*
- b. "[I]t could create an unwelcome precedent for counties such as France, the United States and Britain and their dependencies in the Pacific and elsewhere".*
- c. "[I]t [c]ould also create a controversial precedent strengthening Palestine's case for a place in the UN".*

I would be grateful if you could treat subparts (a), (b) and (c) of my request as separate requests.

I would also be grateful for the document title, type, and date of the documents that contain the aforementioned information.

We have combined your OIA requests under our reference OIA 28596, and are responding to both in this response.

You asked for Cabinet briefings relating to the United States' recognition of Cooks Island and Niue as sovereign states. We do not hold any Cabinet briefings on this topic, therefore we are refusing this part of your request under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the information requested is does not exist.

Other information relating to United States' recognition of Cooks Island and Niue as sovereign states is publicly available on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade website at: <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/OIA/OIA-2023/OIA-28505-US-recognition-of-Cook-Islands-and-Niue-30-March-2023.pdf>. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(d) of the OIA, as the information is publicly available.

With reference to the second part of your request, we do not hold any information in relation to the article "Cook Islands push for independence from NZ" (Stuff, 30 May 2015) and the specific passages you referenced, therefore this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the information requested does not exist.

Please note that we may publish this letter (with your personal details redacted) on the Ministry's website.

If you have any questions about this decision, you can contact us by email at: DM-ESD@mfat.govt.nz. You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision by contacting www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SC', written in a cursive style.

Sarah Corbett
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade