

14 September 2023

[REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request of 25 August 2023 under the Official Information Act, 1982 (the Act) about the appointment Iona Holsted as Chair of the Chief Executives' Sponsoring Group to provide governance to the Crown Response Unit.

In your request you referred to comments on page 139 of the Royal Commission of Inquiry's report '*He Purapura Ora, he Māru Tipu: From Redress to Puretumu Torowhānui*'. You asked the following questions:

*In that context, we request, under the Official Information Act, the following information:*

- a) *What consideration, if any, was given to Ms Holsted's previously unfounded allegations against survivors' advocates when determining the appropriateness of Ms Holsted's appointment as Chair of the Crown Response Unit?*
- b) *What matters, generally, were given consideration in determining the appropriateness of Ms Holsted's appointment as Chair of the Crown Response Unit?*
- c) *Who was responsible for the appointment of Ms Holsted as Chair of the Crown Response Unit?*

Before I respond to your specific questions, I feel it would be beneficial to provide some background about the establishment of the Sponsoring Group.

The Sponsoring Group's composition and broad role overseeing the Crown's response was agreed by the Social Wellbeing Board in early 2019. At that time the Chair was the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki (Grainne Moss). The other members were the Chief Executive of the Crown Law Office, Secretary for Education, Director-General of Health, and Chief Executive of the Ministry of Social Development (much the same as the current composition but with the addition of the Chief Executive of Whaikaha).

There was no formal appointment process or appointing instrument beyond the Social Wellbeing Board decision. The focus was on the high-level coordination of the Crown Response by the agencies that were likely to hold the most relevant information, provide

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most witnesses for Royal Commission hearings, and be required to consider and respond to eventual recommendations.

Cabinet noted the Crown Response governance arrangements and agreed the core principles that would guide the Crown Response in April 2019. The strategic approach to the Crown's response to the Royal Commission of Inquiry is detailed in a proactively released Cabinet paper and can be viewed at: [Cabinet-paper-Strategic-approach-to-Crown-engagement-with-Royal-Commission-080519.pdf \(abuseinquiryresponse.govt.nz\)](https://www.abuseinquiryresponse.govt.nz/Cabinet-paper-Strategic-approach-to-Crown-engagement-with-Royal-Commission-080519.pdf).

Ms Moss stepped down from her role as Chief Executive at Oranga Tamariki in February 2021. This meant that an acting Chief Executive would be in place at Oranga Tamariki and would have a significant workload in the new role. For this reason, it was agreed that the replacement Sponsoring Group Chair should be selected from the remaining members.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a particularly large draw on the time of the Director-General of Health and Chief Executive of the Crown Law Office, which left two practical choices. The then Minister of State Services was also Minister of Education at the time (and noting that Ministry of Social Development also had a significant role in COVID-19 response in terms of wage subsidies), it was agreed among the Sponsoring Group that Iona Holsted (as Secretary for Education) would make the most logical sense. This was discussed with the Minister who endorsed the decision and Ms Holsted subsequently assumed chairing duties. No formal process was required as the Chairing responsibilities are performed as part of Ms Holsted's role as Secretary for Education.

The role of Chair involves convening Sponsoring Group meetings, acting as the primary contact point for the Minister, and final sign-off for papers as delegated by the Sponsoring Group. The work is done in a co-ordinated and supported manner, and any resulting actions are collectively owned by the group. Responsibility for decisions round the Crown's response to the Royal Commission sit with the Minister for Public Service (Hon Andrew Little).

I note that in a recent media response regarding Ms Holsted's role as Chair, Minister Little stated *"I am confident Iona is effectively leading the Crown Response Unit and am satisfied she is appropriately representing my interests as Minister for the Public Service in my responsibility to lead the Crown's response to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care"*.

- a) In response to question a), to the best of my knowledge, no specific consideration was given to the comments on page 139 that were attributed to Ms Holsted.
- b) In response to question b), as outlined, no formal process regarding Ms Holsted assuming the Chair of the Sponsoring Group was required as the chairing responsibilities are performed as part of Ms Holsted's role as Secretary for Education.
- c) In response to question c), and as noted above, it was collectively agreed among the Sponsoring Group that Ms Holsted would assume chairing duties. The then Minister of State Services endorsed this decision.

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Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman can be contacted by email at [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that in the interests of transparency this response, with your personal details removed, will be published on our website at: [Rauemi - Resources | Crown response to the Abuse in Care Inquiry \(abuseinquiryresponse.govt.nz\)](https://www.rauemi.govt.nz/resources/crown-response-to-the-abuse-in-care-inquiry).

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Isaac Carlson', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Isaac Carlson, Director

**Crown Response Unit, Crown Response to the Abuse in Care**