

DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET - AUGUST 2010

GUIDELINES FOR POST-ELECTION CONSULTATIONS WITH INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

1. In the period between the date of a general election and the announcement that the Prime Minister intends to continue in office or to resign, the following guidance will apply to discussions between independent members and senior officials.
2. Under these arrangements:
 - a. at the request of the independent member, through the relevant Minister's office, with the agreement of the Prime Minister (requests may also come directly to the Prime Minister) and following notice of the intended meeting to the Leader of the Opposition, senior officials may hold discussions with independent members; and
 - b. an independent member may have staff present; a Departmental Secretary may have other officials present.
3. Officials will not be authorised to discuss Government or Opposition policies (with the exception of the matters set out below) or give opinions on matters of a party political nature.
4. The briefings by officials may include:
 - a. matters relating to machinery of government and administration, including the administrative and technical practicalities and procedures involved in implementation of policies proposed by the Government and Opposition parties;
 - b. information on the international, economic and budget outlook, including the costs of Government and Opposition policies and their net impact on the Pre-Election Economic and Fiscal Outlook aggregate budget estimates; and
 - c. factual information of the kind that an official might provide to a parliamentary committee.
5. Prior to briefing independent members officials would:
 - a. brief the Government on their assessment of matters related to Government policies that would be subject to briefing with the independent members; and
 - b. brief the Opposition on their assessment of matters related to Opposition policies that would be subject to briefing with the independent members.
6. Subsequent to briefing independent members officials would:
 - a. brief the Government on Government matters discussed with the independents that had otherwise not previously been discussed with the Government;
 - b. brief the Opposition on Opposition matters discussed with the independents that had otherwise not previously been discussed with the Opposition.
7. Officials who are uncertain about whether to provide specific information may take the question on notice and provide an appropriate response as soon as possible following further consideration and, if necessary, consultation with officials in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.
8. Secretaries and officials of the Departments of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Treasury and Finance and Deregulation undertake to keep confidential and not to disclose to their respective Ministers, or their Offices, information about costing assumptions provided to them by the Opposition.