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**MANATŪ KAUPAPA
WAONGA**
NEW ZEALAND
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

3 November 2025

RESPONSE TO YOUR OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUEST

Thank you for your email of 6 October 2025, in which you requested, pursuant to the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

Under the Official Information Act, please supply all briefings, reports, submissions, aides-memoire, and notes produced on the AUKUS security pact from 9 August 2025 to 6 October 2025.

Talking points to support international engagement

Attached are the standard talking points relating to AUKUS Pillar II that were provided as part of the Minister's briefing pack for her October trip to Washington. These are routinely included in briefing packs to support international Defence engagements, where the engagement is not primarily AUKUS-related. These points were also provided as part of the Secretary of Defence's briefing pack to support bilateral engagement with Senior US officials, 1–3 October, which included the July 2025 Ministerial briefing on AUKUS Pillar II, which is published on the Ministry of Defence website at <https://defence.govt.nz/publications/aukus-pillar-ii-developments-and-proposed-next-steps/>.

Information is withheld where making it available would be likely to prejudice:

- the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand (section 6(a) of the Act) and
- the entrusting of information to the Government of New Zealand on a basis of confidence by the Government of any other country or any agency of such a Government (section 6(b)(i) of the Act).

Further information is withheld to:

- maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials (section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Act) and
- maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any department or organisation in the course of their duty (section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act).

Domestic AUKUS Pillar II meetings

As part of the policy development process, there were two meetings of agencies from the Policy and Technical Working Group on 22 August and 6 October.

Given the early stage of the policy process, further details relating to these meetings are withheld at this time in accordance with the Act, in order to:

- maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials (section 9(2)(f)(iv)) and
- maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any department or organisation in the course of their duty (section 9(2)(g)(i)).

Information is also withheld where making the information available would be likely to prejudice the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand (section 6(a) of the Act).

In terms of all elements of your request, where information is withheld under section 9, the public interest is not considered to outweigh the need to protect this information.

Under section 28(3) of the Act you have the right to request the Ombudsman to investigate and review this response.

Yours sincerely

Richard Schmidt
Deputy Secretary, Policy and Planning

Enclosure:

- *Background Briefing: AUKUS Pillar II – Washington 2025*

Key messages

- New Zealand is committed to working with the US and our other key security partners on the common objective of ensuring a secure, stable, and resilient Indo-Pacific, and an effective rules-based international system*.
- For that reason, we have welcomed AUKUS as an initiative to enhance regional security and stability.
- New Zealand Defence and Foreign Affairs officials are working with AUKUS partners to determine where there may be potential opportunities for us to participate in Pillar II projects for mutual benefit and where we can add value.
- [REDACTED] s6(a), s9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- We will be looking for where commercial opportunities may exist, as they relate to Pillar II.
- We are grateful for our engagements with AUKUS partners, these engagements have been helpful for understanding how we might develop [REDACTED] s6(a), s9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED] in the context of AUKUS Pillar II.
- Cabinet will decide whether New Zealand will participate in Pillar II in due course; no decision has been made yet.
- We haven't yet set a timeframe for a decision as this requires ongoing discussion with the AUKUS members. In this context we're very interested in your review and current thinking on AUKUS.

Background

1. New Zealand engagement with AUKUS partners, [REDACTED] s6(a), s6(b)(i) [REDACTED] is continuing. [REDACTED] s6(a) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
2. [REDACTED] s6(a), s9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
3. [REDACTED] s6(a), s6(b)(i) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] the US review will be completed "in the fall"

(September-December)

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

4.

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

5. Ongoing clear communication both publicly and to AUKUS members on the deliberate, considered approach New Zealand is following about whether New Zealand will decide to commit to being part of the AUKUS construct.

s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

Released under the Official Information Act 1982