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

8 June 2026

Graeme Doull  
[fyi-request-34672-cad32c6e@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-34672-cad32c6e@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Dear Graeme

## RESPONSE TO YOUR OFFICIAL INFORMATION REQUEST

Thank you for your email of 10 May 2026, in which you requested, pursuant to the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

*Please provide documentation relating to, and showing, how the decision to procure frigates was made, specifically to answer the following questions:*

- 1. In developing the use case to determine that frigates were required, how did Defence answer the question from DCP25: "whether a different technology provides a better investment, and whether a generational technology jump is justified"?*
- 2. What is the use case for frigates? Specifically, what effects does a frigate need to deliver?*
- 3. What alternative courses of action were explored to deliver the same effects, and how were the different options assessed and compared?*
- 4. What independent reviews were undertaken regarding the decision to procure frigates?*

*Please provide the indicative staff hours, word count of documentation, and cost associated with making the decision to procure frigates.*

*Please also provide documentation relating to, and showing, how the decision to shortlist the Mogami and UK Type 31 frigates was made, specifically to answer the following questions:*

- 1. In developing the business case to select the type of frigate, how did Defence answer the question from DCP25: "what is the Australian approach, and is there any reason for New Zealand to take a different approach"?*
- 2. How was the UK's Type 31 frigate shortlisted, and what other frigates were considered?*

*What would be the grounds for selecting equipment that differs from the ADF solution, and what criteria would be used to assess the different options?*

- 3. What independent reviews were undertaken regarding the decision to shortlist the two types of frigates?*

4. Please provide the indicative staff hours, word count of documentation, and cost associated with making the decision to shortlist these frigates.

We have endeavoured to provide responses to your questions below regarding the Maritime Fleet Renewal Programme (the Programme) and have provided some further context regarding the status of this project. As outlined in the *2025 Defence Capability Plan* most of the current ships in the Royal New Zealand Navy fleet will reach the end of their intended design life by the mid-2030s. As a result, the Programme has been established to analyse a range of options to deliver a modern navy fleet. More details can be found here: <https://www.defence.govt.nz/our-work/equip/projects-in-definition/maritime-fleet-renewal/>.

On 7 May the Minister of Defence announced the Government's work regarding the Programme, which includes the replacement of the Royal New Zealand Navy's frigates: <https://beehive.govt.nz/release/frigate-project-progress-key-maritime-security>. It is intended that Defence will establish individual projects and undertake engagement with industry and security partners to develop Detailed Business Cases for individual capabilities in the Programme.

It is important to note that at this time no decisions to procure have been made, and no solutions ruled out.

With regard to the combat vessels, the decision to prioritise discussions with partners and focus on the Japanese designed Mogami class frigate selected by Australia and the UK's Type 31 frigate to inform the business case process reflects our need to be interoperable and to work with those we already have strong and enduring defence and security arrangements with. Two documents relate to this:

No	Title	Date
1.	Maritime Fleet Renewal Programme Business Case Cabinet Paper	18/02/2026
2.	Aide Memoire: Maritime Fleet Renewal Programme Business Case	09/02/2026

The Programme remains at the early stages of development. As such, I am withholding the above two documents in full, as it includes detail that is subject to future Ministerial and Cabinet decisions (pursuant to section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Act) and in order to enable a Minister of the Crown or any department to carry on, without prejudice or disadvantage, commercial negotiations (pursuant to section 9(2)(j) of the Act). In addition, making available certain elements of the information 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).

However, pursuant to section 16(1)(e) of the Act, and considering the public interest, I have provided a summary that reflects the substantive decisions that were made by Cabinet, and the above two documents (enclosed at Annex A).

It is not considered that the public interest outweighs the need to protect the information withheld under section 9(2) at this point in the process. In line with the normal process for Defence procurements, further details will be released as the procurement process progresses.

You asked "*What independent reviews were undertaken regarding the decision to shortlist the two types of frigates?*" No such information exists, as such I am declining this part of your request pursuant to section 18(e) of the Act.

The Ministry does not hold information for work and costs to-date that are specific to the frigate replacement, so your request for this information is declined under section 18(g)(i) of the Act. However I can advise that the Government has set aside in Budget 2026 \$51 million

in operating funding over the next four years for the overall programme to look at the make-up of New Zealand's maritime fleet.

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

Yours sincerely

PP

Richard Schmidt  
**Deputy Secretary, Defence Policy and Planning**

Enclosed:

- Annex A: Maritime Fleet Renewal Programme

## ***Annex A: Maritime Fleet Renewal Programme***

All the Royal New Zealand Navy's ships, except the sustainment vessel HMNZS *Aotearoa*, will reach their end of life between 2032 and 2036, which provides a unique opportunity through the Maritime Fleet Renewal Programme to transform the Navy and incorporate new technology to better deliver against the Government's defence policy objectives.

The *2025 Defence Capability Plan* indicated Government would invest in a mix of ships to undertake combat, projection, maritime security patrol, and operations in the Southern Ocean. The plan also prioritised investment in uncrewed surface vessels in the first four years to provide the NZDF and other government agencies with better visibility of activities in the region.

The programme is investigating a range of options to deliver a modern, combat capable naval fleet. No decisions have been made on the make-up of that fleet.

Defence will establish individual projects and undertake engagement with industry and security partners to develop Detailed Business Cases for individual capabilities in the Maritime Fleet Renewal Programme.

Defence agencies will ensure that the Detailed Business Cases include consideration of workforce, infrastructure, information technology, and other supporting areas needed to deliver military capabilities, and to consider a range of options for delivering these capabilities.

A significant organisational change effort will also take place to transform how the Navy operates, so that the Navy is more efficient and sustainable, maximising investment in both people and assets.

### ***Combat Vessels***

Replacement of New Zealand's Anzac frigates has been identified as future indicative investment in the 2029-2039 period. Selection of combat capabilities within the future fleet will be determined through the usual business case process.

New Zealand is prioritising discussions with the Royal Navy and Royal Australian Navy to inform the next stage for potentially replacing the Anzac frigates and ongoing service arrangements.

The decision to prioritise discussions with partners and focus on the Japanese designed Mogami class frigate selected by Australia and the UK's Type 31 frigate to inform the business case process reflects our need to be interoperable and to work with those we already have strong and enduring defence and security arrangements with.

These two combat vessel programmes are mature and are at a stage that allows adequate analysis against New Zealand requirements.

The benefits to partnering using this approach for the future combat capability include an improved ability to maintain advanced combat systems by leveraging partners' systems and software updates, improved value for money by leveraging economies of scale, faster introduction into service, potential for local companies to support New Zealand and partner vessels, and an improved training pipeline through increased access to specialist courses and training.

However, no final decisions have been made, and no solution ruled out. Advice on next steps is expected to be provided to Cabinet before the end of 2027.

Work continues on the sustainment and maintenance of the Anzac frigates HMNZS *Te Kaha* and *Te Mana*.