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

14 August 2026

Dear

RESPONSE TO YOUR REQUEST FOR OFFICIAL INFORMATION

Thank you for your email of 20 July 2026, in which you requested, pursuant to the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), *all briefings, reports, submissions, aides-memoire, and notes produced on the AUKUS security pact from 9 May 2026 to 20 July 2027.*

The Ministry of Defence has identified four documents in scope of your request:

#	Document	Date	Details
1	AUKUS Pillar II content in the briefing pack supporting Ministerial overseas travel: <i>Shangri-La Dialogue 2026 Meeting, 29–31 May 2026</i>	May 2026	Provided previously
2-3	Briefings were provided to support the Minister of Defence and Defence Chief Executives for the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade hearing for the 2026/27 Estimates Review. The same AUKUS Pillar II content was provided for both packs, and this is enclosed as an Annex.	June 2026	Enclosed as an Annex
4	Defence, Science and Technology internal dot-point brief: <i>AUKUS Pillar 2 Technical Update</i>	24 June 2026	Withheld in full

The Shangri-La briefing, including the relevant AUKUS component, has been provided to you previously by the Minister of Defence in his response of 20 July. I refer you to that response, and the associated redactions in accordance with the Act, 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)]; and
- the entrusting of information to the Government of New Zealand on a basis of confidence by the Government of any other country or agency of such a Government [section 6(b)(i)].

In addition, information was withheld from that pack in accordance with the Act, in order to:

- maintain the constitutional conventions for the timing 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) of the Act].

The points that were included in both the Ministerial briefing pack and Defence Chief Executive briefing pack for the 2026/27 Estimates Review hearing are enclosed as an Annex. Certain information is withheld in accordance with the Act:

- where release would be likely to prejudice the entrusting of information to the Government of New Zealand on a basis of confidence by the Government of any other country or agency of such a Government [section 6(b)(i)]; and
- in order to 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)].

The internal dot-point brief is withheld in full in accordance with the Act, in order to:

- protect information that 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)]; and
- protect information entrusted 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)].

Where information has been withheld in accordance with section 9(2) of the Act, no public interest has been identified that outweighs the need to protect it.

As you will be aware from the Ministry's previous responses, AUKUS talking points are routinely included in material to support officials in engagements that are not AUKUS related. As such meetings are not AUKUS related, we have not considered these talking points as in scope of your request.

- [withheld under section 6(b)(i) of the Act].

Questions and answers [withheld under section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act]

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

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ANNEX: AUKUS PILLAR II BRIEFING CONTENT FOR BOTH FADTC MINISTERIAL BRIEFING PACK AND DEFENCE CHIEF EXECUTIVE BRIEFING PACK

AUKUS Pillar II

Key Messages

- We are committed to working with key security partners to ensure a secure, stable, and resilient region.
- In this context, New Zealand has welcomed AUKUS, and Australia's involvement in AUKUS, as an initiative to uphold regional security and stability.
- Any decision on whether New Zealand participates in AUKUS Pillar II, including projects, will be made by Cabinet following a standard policy process. No decision has been taken.
- Cabinet will make this decision in due course, once officials have gathered the necessary information to present detailed and comprehensive advice to them.

AUKUS Pillar II

- Pillar Two of AUKUS includes cooperation on emerging security issues, including areas in which we already work closely with Australia, the US and the UK.
- Officials have engaged with the AUKUS partners, on a no-commitment basis, to better understand the details of Pillar Two. This reflects our deliberate and considered approach to exploring Pillar II.

Background

- On 16 September 2021, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States announced the creation of AUKUS - a non-binding, trilateral partnership focused on defence and security technology and capability.
- The first initiative – and key driver – of the partnership is Australia's acquisition of at least eight nuclear powered submarines. The submarines will be nuclear powered, but not nuclear armed, and include precision guided conventional weapons (as do Australia's current submarines).
- AUKUS Pillar Two also covers the potential for future deeper cooperation on non-nuclear emerging security and defence technologies, including artificial intelligence and autonomy, advanced cyber, quantum technologies, electronic warfare, innovation and information sharing, hypersonics, and additional undersea capabilities.
- On 1 December 2023, AUKUS partners released a joint statement following the AUKUS Defence Ministers' meeting in California. This statement detailed the progress that has been achieved across both Pillars of AUKUS to date, including but not limited to a Deep Space Advanced Radar Capability (DARC) and the AUKUS Maritime Autonomy Experimentation and exercise series.
- On 30 May 2026, at the Shangri-la Dialogue, AUKUS Defence Ministers announced a Pillar II "Signature Project" relating to the cooperation on Uncrewed Underwater Vehicles (UUVs). The AUKUS partners are still working through how additional partners could become involved in Pillar II, but involvement would be on a case-by-case, project-by-project basis. New Zealand has made no decision to participate in any particular Pillar II project.

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, Defence Policy and Planning

Enclosed: Annex: AUKUS Pillar II briefing content from FADTC Ministerial briefing pack and Defence Chief Executive briefing pack

Released under the Official Information Act 1982