



MEDIA RELEASE

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REPORT INTO THE UNAUTHORISED DISCLOSURE OF A MINISTRY OF PACIFIC ISLAND AFFAIRS BRIEFING PAPER

AN INDEPENDENT investigation into how a Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs briefing paper came into the possession of a Radio New Zealand journalist has not been able to identify the source or the manner of the leak.

The investigation was carried out by former Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade Neil Walter, at the request of Ministry Chief Executive Dr Colin Tukuitonga.

It followed a Radio New Zealand news item June 17 about a Budget appropriation to the Pacific Economic Development Agency (PEDA). The item quoted from a Ministry briefing to Pacific Island Affairs Minister the Hon Georgina te Heuheu.

Mr Walter interviewed 31 people and studied all relevant papers, and phone and electronic document logs during his investigation. He reported to Dr Tukuitonga this week.

“I have been unable to arrive at any firm conclusions as to either the manner in which the leak took place or who was responsible for it,” Mr Walter said.

“While it seems unlikely to have come from outside the Ministry, I have not been able to find any evidence that an MPIA staff member was responsible for the leak.”

Mr Walter said he was satisfied that MPIA staff were aware of the rules for handling official papers, and that no-one “would have been in any doubt about the political sensitivity of the material.”

Dr Tukuitonga said Mr Walter had made two recommendations relating to systems and processes. “The first recommendation is for regular reminders to staff about handling official documents and dealing with media.

“I have this morning informed all staff about the report and its recommendations and reiterated our rules in both these areas. I am confident that no-one is in any doubt about them.

“I note that we are about to enhance communication with staff via a new intranet, which will consolidate all our procedures and policies in an easily navigable central database. There will be training for staff when the intranet is implemented.”

“We are also collating all processes and protocols in an Induction Manual for any new staff.

“I note also that last year we did the groundwork for a new records structure which will streamline file classification, storage and access. We expect to finalise this in the current financial year.”

Dr Tukuitonga said Mr Walter had done a thorough and credible job. “While there will be those disappointed that Mr Walter has not identified a culprit, I am satisfied that he has investigated to the fullest extent possible.

“I am keeping the file open in the hope that further information on the leak may come to light.”

“Any organisation requires its staff to act with integrity. This has particular meaning in Government agencies. I am confident that staff in the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs know what it means to act appropriately and in accordance with the *State Services Standards of Integrity and Conduct*.”

ENDS

For a copy of Neil Walter’s report and Terms of Reference see www.mpia.govt.nz/news

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