

## Request for transcripts of post-Cabinet press conferences

<b>Legislation</b>	Official Information Act 1982, s 18(f)
<b>Agency</b>	Prime Minister
<b>Ombudsman</b>	Dame Beverley Wakem
<b>Case number(s)</b>	370101
<b>Date</b>	August 2014

---

*Prime Minister's office wanted to compare draft transcript with audio recording to check for errors—'substantial collation or research' does not encompass a quality assurance check of that nature—10 hours work did not amount to 'substantial collation or research'*

The Prime Minister refused a request for eight transcripts of his post-Cabinet press conferences and the requester complained to the Ombudsman. The Prime Minister's office estimated that approximately 10 hours would be required to make the transcripts available. The Chief Ombudsman did not consider that some of the 'required' tasks were reasonably necessary, or that those tasks could constitute 'collation or research'.

One task was to 'finalise' the transcripts prior to release in order to correct 'errors and gaps'. This involved comparing the draft transcript with the audio recording and making any necessary changes. The Chief Ombudsman found that 'substantial collation or research' does not encompass a quality assurance check of this nature. An OIA request is for the information actually held at the time it is made. It was up to the Prime Minister's Office whether it took the extra step of checking that the transcript accurately reflected what was said at the press conference. However, it was not a step that related to the accessibility of the information itself, which is the focus of section 18(f). The Chief Ombudsman noted that Parliamentary debates are published electronically on the basis that 'the text is subject to correction until it is published as a volume', and said the transcripts in this case could be published with a similar rider.

Another task was to redact information that was not ‘*official information*’ because it was not held by the Prime Minister in his official capacity. The Chief Ombudsman queried whether this was a necessary task given the information had already been made public by releasing it to the media at the press conferences.

The Chief Ombudsman formed the opinion that the amount of work required in this case did not amount to ‘*substantial collation or research*’. It was not unreasonable for the Prime Minister’s staff to devote up to 10 hours to the processing of this particular request. The Prime Minister’s Office accepted the Chief Ombudsman’s opinion and released the transcripts to the requester.

The Prime Minister now proactively releases the transcripts of post-Cabinet press conferences.

*This case note is published under the authority of the [Ombudsmen Rules 1989](#). It sets out an Ombudsman’s view on the facts of a particular case. It should not be taken as establishing any legal precedent that would bind an Ombudsman in future.*