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Vote: Ministerial Services

1. Sector Overview: Ministerial Services

Operational support and strategic advice are provided to the Minister Responsible for Ministerial Services by the Executive Government Support (EGS) group within the Department of Internal Affairs. The portfolio encompasses responsibilities for:

- ministers' office and domestic accommodation
- ministers' office staffing
- the provision of self-drive and chauffeured transport
- budget management for ministers' offices and travel arrangements (both internal and overseas)
- the provision of information technology and media services to ministers
- management of guest of government visits, ministerial and state functions
- state funerals.

2. Strategic and Legislative Framework: Ministerial Services

This portfolio aims to provide high quality support services to Ministers to assist them to carry out their roles in an effective, cost-efficient manner. Continued emphasis has been placed on improving the services offered and delivery, while ensuring that key relationships with Cabinet Office and the Parliamentary Service continue to be effective.

In July 2001 a number of changes were implemented in the structure of EGS. This resulted in added strength in human resources, and financial and advisory capability.

The group continues to maintain and improve capability, knowledge, skill, technology and business processes to provide professional services when and where required.

Technology is a critical factor in achieving excellence in service delivery. EGS continues to invest capital in vital information technology infrastructure to ensure that the services provided meet the

needs of its clients.

Continued public and media interest in the cost of government, and more particularly the cost of minister's offices, is likely to continue. The Department ensures it keeps its costs for these services as reasonable as possible.

3. Minister's role: Ministerial Services

The Minister Responsible for Ministerial Services has no specific legislative responsibilities other than those applying generally to ministers.

It is usual for the Minister Responsible for Ministerial Services to take a close interest in the services provided to ministers. In practice, this oversight may be delegated to a senior member of the Minister's staff. Oversight functions may include:

- monitoring the expenditure of ministerial offices and ministers' internal and external travel
- approving increases in staff numbers in ministerial offices, including any proposals by ministers to appoint contract staff
- allocating ministerial office suites
- allocating ministerial housing
- overseeing the administration of entitlements to ministerial vehicles.

4. Department's Role: Ministerial Services

Operational support and strategic advice are provided to the Minister Responsible for Ministerial Services by the Department of Internal Affairs' Executive Government Support Group (EGS). EGS includes several services which work together to support ministers:

Ministerial Services

- personnel management - the appointment of staff in ministers' offices, security clearances, payroll and other employment matters
- administrative and advisory services - including accounting and general financial services, office accommodation, travel facilitation and payments, communications, and a wide range of general advice
- provision of ministerial housing - including lease negotiations, building maintenance and refurbishment, provision of household items, account payments and advisory services.

VIP Transport Service

- provides land transport primarily for Ministers of the Crown, the Leader of the Opposition, former Governors-General and Prime Ministers, and other customers. Services are provided on a 24-hour, seven-day basis.

MINIT (Ministerial Information Technology) Services

- the services are contracted to Unisys to manage. Support is based at the parliamentary site and is provided to agreed levels of service.

Media and Communications Unit

- monitors all New Zealand daily newspapers plus business and Sunday newspapers and a selection of other newspapers
- produces "*Press Alert*"
- provides specialised news monitoring services
- administers the Executive Government website
- provides access to several electronic news archives
- provides scanning and audio-visual presentation facilities
- supplies mobile telephone equipment, training and follow-up services to ministers and staff.

Visits and Ceremonial Office (VCO)

- manages guest of government visits, state and ceremonial occasions and commemorative events
- works with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Prime Minister's Office (Heads of Government visits) and Government House (Heads of State and Royalty) to manage the logistics of the visits and develop programmes and itineraries.

5. Key Issues/Themes For Next Three Years: Ministerial Services

Priority Issue

Formation of government

- meeting ministers' requirements for a rapid, reliable commencement in government through effective management of the logistics around office accommodation, staffing and equipment, domestic accommodation and transport.

- the first priority of EGS on the announcement of ministerial portfolios is to establish ministers as quickly as possible in their working environment to enable them to carry out their responsibilities. Priorities on allocation of offices, office budgets, staffing and other needs will be determined as a result of consultation with the Minister Responsible for Ministerial Services.

Medium term issues

Personnel Management

- ministerial staff (other than seconded staff) are employees of the Department of Internal Affairs. Ministerial Services is responsible for all staffing matters including recruitment, termination and discipline. Ministers are in legal terms “agents” of the employer. The employment situation is therefore complex. Ministerial Services supports ministers in achieving the outcomes they seek. Successful outcomes depend on early and effective communication between Ministerial Services and ministers. As employer, Ministerial Services manages both legal risk and the consequent risks, in the political environment, of unfavourable publicity which can affect recruitment and efficiency.

Health and Safety

- office accommodation is close to capacity. Health and safety requirements will affect any proposals for significant increases in the number of staff working in offices.
- the Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Bill aims to reduce the human and economic costs of poor workplace health and safety. Stress is recognised as a workplace hazard under existing law. The Bill explicitly includes references to stress and fatigue. Stress and fatigue can be an issue for staff working in Ministerial Services. Ministerial Services actively manages this with the aim of preventing harm to employees.

IT Contract (MINIT)

- the current contract (with Unisys) will have been in place for six years by June 2003. It is appropriate for it to be re-tendered and it is anticipated that the selection process will take a minimum of three months. This will commence in late 2002. It is imperative that the next contract represents value for money.

Visits and Ceremonial Office (VCO)

- the America's Cup begins in October 2002, with Louis Vuitton Cup races from October to January 2003, followed by the America's Cup in February 2003. It is anticipated that this event will attract visiting dignitaries.

www.beehive.govt.nz

- this website has been upgraded and enhanced. Rapid development of internet technology and demand, coupled with the popularity of the site, will create a need for further development in the three-year term.

6. Key Stakeholders: Ministerial Services

- Ministers of the Crown (all services)
- Governor-General, former Governors-General and their spouses (VIP Transport Service; Visits and Ceremonial Office)
- Prime Minister and former Prime Ministers and their spouses (VIP Transport Service; Visits and Ceremonial Office)
- Parliament and The Parliamentary Service (joint facilities and co-operation)
- High Court judges and Court of Appeal judges (VIP Transport Service)
- diplomats, consular and official representatives of overseas governments (Visits and Ceremonial Office)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the NZ Defence Force and NZ Police (Visits and Ceremonial Office)
- Mayors of major cities (Visits and Ceremonial Office)
- government departments and agencies providing seconded staff to ministers
- media (relationship with ministers' media staff)
- visitors to ministers' offices
- people corresponding with ministers.

