

From: [Ella Bambrough-Copeland](#) on behalf of [James Palmer](#)
To: [All MfE Staff](#)
Subject: [STAFF IN-CONFIDENCE]Back from COP, looking to the new year
Date: Friday, 15 December 2023 4:00:38 pm
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Kia ora koutou

Yesterday afternoon I arrived back home to Aotearoa after nearly a week spent with our team and the new Climate Minister Simon Watts at COP28 in the UAE. I was greeted on landing with a recording of the skit, which you'll be pleased to know brought me straight back down to earth, talk about keeping it real! Great job team, very funny and truly clever !

I wanted to quickly let you know how the trip went and check in with you ahead of a busy final working week of the year, which will include the government's mini budget on Wednesday. I also want to share some high level details about what's likely to happen at Manatū Mō Te Taiao early in the new year.

I'll talk in more detail about COP with you next week, including in my blog. I was hugely impressed by the work, including incredibly long hours, put in by own team of negotiators in Dubai - Jacqui, Alice and Hemi, supported by Ankit and James (Coombes). It was really useful to observe the UN process in action, and see the challenges and opportunities for Aotearoa New Zealand in working with partners overseas to reduce emissions and increase resilience.

There was clearly a huge momentum and urgency internationally to decarbonise the global economy. However, this has come 40 years later than it was required. This means the world needs to go much, much faster now to avert the worst of the growing climate crisis.

In many ways the timing of COP was perfect for forming a new relationship with the Climate Minister Simon Watts. The trip gave us a chance to discuss many aspects of the climate portfolio and start to understand his thinking and priorities for the ministry's work programme.

Minister Watts participated in more than a dozen bilateral meetings with other climate ministers and was involved in negotiating strategy meetings with colleagues from the Pacific and aligned developed countries. He also spoke at a number of side events and did a lot of media, all very ably for someone only a few days into the job. I know he was particularly impressed with our people and the support he was given by MfE and colleagues from MFAT.

This, the work we've done on the 100 days (including by those deployed into new areas), and the professionalism we've collectively shown in these early days have really set us up for productive relationships with the new government.

Government's first 100 days and the mini budget

While I've been away Nadeine, who has been acting for me, and other dep secs and their teams

have continued to meet with ministers, and get more direction from them about their priorities - particularly their expectations of us in their first 100 days programme.

As you know, the Finance Minister will outline her mini budget on Wednesday next week. As a ministry, we've already been given a clear steer on some of the work ministers want us to stop, and other work they plan to begin. We can expect to see some of this reflected in the mini budget. However, it is unlikely to give us a clear indication of our full funding situation for future years.

I know some kaimahi are worried about what the Government's promised public sector funding cuts will mean for them, and for the ministry. I want to acknowledge that this uncertainty may be a difficult way to end the year for some of us. Like we've said often lately, it's really important not to get ahead of the facts, particularly at times like this when we know people around us may be feeling on edge.

The next stage of the operating model

At the moment we have not yet planned or scoped the next stage of the development of the operating model, including any impact there may be on jobs. However, as we have signalled for some time, we do expect changes will need to be planned once our funding and work programme becomes more clear next year.

Te Pūrengi will begin this next stage with a workshop in late January. In this we will consider proposals for our ways of working that will make us a more effective, purposeful and integrated organisation, and whether we need to make further changes to our structure. Decisions that flow from that will take some time to work through and implement.

Practically, this timing means that *if* we need to reduce or make changes to jobs these changes won't take effect till after end of March, at the earliest. And, as I've promised before, if we do need to take steps like this, we'll consult fully with those affected, as is fair and appropriate.

In the meantime, I am committed to being transparent, open and honest with you as we move through the next stage of our development as an organisation, and as we change our work in response to the government's priorities.

Throughout the last few years of intense mahi, and change, you've proven that our people are our greatest strength. Together we will continue to provide the expert, free, fair and frank advice, consistent with the Treaty, we have always done. And we will continue to provide government with evidence-based options for managing some of the biggest, most challenging issues facing the country.

Thanks for continuing to do excellent work and to look after each other during these changing times. It's noticed and valued. I'll see you at Kotahitanga on Monday.

Ngā mihi nui
James

James Palmer

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