

Political Neutrality Video transcript

As a Public servant, you have the same rights to freedom of speech and political activity in your private life as other New Zealanders.

Being politically neutral at work does not generally stop you from being politically active outside work. For most public servants, participating in politics outside the workplace is unlikely to breach their agency's political neutrality obligations.

But there are some things to think about to work out if a particular political interest, or activity, might impact on your work role, and whether it can be managed. It may depend on the seniority or nature of your role or the scope and scale of the political activity.

There are situations where you should exercise careful judgement. Consider if any of these apply to you. Do you hold a senior position within an agency, have regular direct contact with Ministers or represent a public face of your agency. Or, do you work in a Minister's office or are you actively engaged in providing advice to Ministers on an issue that is the subject of contested political activity.

The greater the seniority and influence, the less appropriate political activity outside work may be.

Any potential for overlap, or conflict, will depend on what your role involves and the requirements of your role. You are more likely to be impacted by political activity outside work if your role involves regular direct contact with Ministers; communication on behalf of your agency; or advising Ministers on politically topical issues.

When considering the scope and scale of the political activity, ask yourself if the political activity:

- has a negative impact on the confidence of Ministers and the public, in the political neutrality of the public sector.
- interferes with your duties or workplace relationships.
- involves a serious breach of the Standards of Integrity and Conduct, or criminal conduct.

- brings into question your ability to perform your role in the eyes of the public.
- Or causes some other kind of harm to the legitimate interests of the public sector.

So, there's a lot to think about. But you can simplify it by asking yourself these key questions.

And remember...

Keep your politics out of your job and your job out of your politics.