

Subject: OIA 2026/11 – Clarification of Prime Minister dates and records
Date: Thursday, 21 May 2026 at 4:03:17 PM New Zealand Standard Time
From: McGuinness Institute OIAs
To: parlinfo@parliament.govt.nz
Attachments: image001.jpg, image003.jpg, NZ Gazette - 19 December 1996.pdf

Kia ora,

OIA 2026/11 – Clarification of Prime Minister dates and records

We are in the process of writing a book titled *Nation Voices: New Zealand's premiers and prime ministers in their own words*. More information can be found on our website [here](#). We are using your web pages, [Prime Ministers of New Zealand since 1856](#) and [Governments in New Zealand since 1856](#), as the basis for our research. In light of this, we have the following questions:

Question 1: Please clarify which date in December 1996 was Rt Hon James Bolger appointed Prime Minister? Note: The New Zealand Parliament website above says 12 December 1996 (see screenshot below), while the New Zealand Gazette says he was appointed on 16 December 1996 (see PDF attached).

47.	James Bolger	2 November 1990 – 11 September 1994	National
		11 September 1994 – 9 May 1995	National/Right of Centre
		9 May 1995 – 28 August 1995	National/Right of Centre*
		28 August 1995 – 28 February 1996	National*
		28 February 1996 – 6 March 1996	National/United
		6 March 1996 – 12 December 1996	National/United*
		12 December 1996 – 8 December 1997	National/NZ First

Question 2: Could you explain what 'Right of Centre' means regarding Rt Hon James Bolger's political party? Note: See screenshot above. It would be helpful if this could be more specific and list the political parties being referred to.

Question 3: Please confirm whether the footnote text 'There were no political parties before 1890' on both web pages (above) should be changed to 'There were no political parties before 1891'? Note: The first mention of a political party is for John Balance's

Liberal Party in 1891. We would also appreciate any information explaining how this shift from the absence of political parties to the formation of the Liberal Party in 1891 came about. Any suggestions in terms of books or links would be most welcome.

Question 4: Please clarify why these four pieces of information (footnotes 3-6) on the [Governments in New Zealand since 1856](#) web page mean in practice? Note: See screenshot below. We want to understand why the reference to the Legislative Council was important. For example, were these the only prime ministers that were also members of the Legislative Council. Please explain.

[3] Frederick Whitaker was a member of the Legislative Council and a member of the House of Representatives at different times. Both his terms as Premier were while he was a member of the Legislative Council.

[4] George Waterhouse was a member of the Legislative Council

[5] Daniel Pollen was a member of the Legislative Council

[6] See footnote 3

Question 5: Could we be provided with a copy of the full letter sent by Prime Minister Rt Hon Jenny Shipley to Rt Hon Winston Peters dismissing him from his ministerial positions on 14 August 1998?

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions or points of clarification.

Many thanks,

Wendy McGuinness

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Chief Executive

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