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Submission:

Thank you for inviting submissions on this important subject. As a former staffer employed under the MOP(S) Act, I make the following comments in relation to three terms of reference:

The Review is seeking feedback on:

- The recruitment of MOP(S) Act staff, including the transparency of arrangements, the use of merit-based recruitment, and pre-engagement checks.

In my experience merit-based recruitment is not widely employed by political parties. This is a shame as it means the talent pool for potential candidates is relatively small. It is who you know, not what you know, that gets you the role.

The lack of transparency also entrenches existing biases. For example, I know of women who were asked whether they have children during job interviews. One candidate felt the minister was no longer interested in her once she answered this question in the affirmative.

As appears to be necessary across the board, it would be beneficial to have mandatory training on appropriate recruitment processes.

- The responsibilities, expectation, and accountability of MOP(S) Act staff.

I have witnessed some MOP(S) staff treating public servants in an appalling manner. This tends to occur more in the months before elections, when experienced staff jump ship, and governments (especially those performing poorly in the polls) fill their offices with inexperienced staff. I suggest mandatory training for political staffers, a widely-read and enforced code of conduct, and a mechanism allowing public servants to lodge anonymous complaints.

The single biggest contributor to poor conduct of political staffers is working conditions. Experienced staffers or those with family responsibilities cannot generally commit to the hours required from those working in political offices. This means that political advisers are generally drawn from a younger more inexperienced demographic. Given the significance of the role I feel the nation would be much better-served by a

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more experienced workforce with real-life experience and strong stakeholder management skills.

- Appropriate public reporting and accountability of the administration of the MOP(S) Act.

The Department of Finance is hamstrung. It cannot simultaneously administer the Act independently while also serving a minister of the government. Responsibility for the administration of the Act should be given to an independent body.

