

## Bill English delivers small 'c' conservative Cabinet reshuffle

- **Winners:** Simon Bridges, Amy Adams, Michael Woodhouse, Alfred Ngaro, Mark Mitchell, Jacqui Dean, Paul Goldsmith
- **Survivors:** Nick Smith, Louise Upston, Gerry Brownlee, Judith Collins
- **Losers:** Jo Goodhew, Jonathan Coleman
- **In Prospect:** Todd Muller, Chris Bishop
- **Nowhere to be Seen:** Scott Simpson

Bill English has delivered less of an overhaul to the John Key administration's Cabinet than many political commentators had expected. **Notable is the survival of Nick Smith**, who retains control of the RMA reforms, freshwater management policy and **construction, as the former 'housing' portfolio is tactfully renamed.**

Also notable is the retention of **Murray McCully** as Foreign Affairs Minister. English's explanation – that he needs McCully's institutional knowledge as one of the developed world's longest serving foreign ministers – is credible. **So was the implied threat from McCully that he might force a by-election** if he was removed from the role. By May, it will be too late for by-elections.

**By keeping both McCully and Education Minister Hekia Parata in place until May** next year, English hopes to get the best of both worlds: stability now and a measure of pre-election rejuvenation next year. This, and other judgements delayed, is consistent with English's willingness to be patient and not to rush into decisions.

However, **Smith now has plenty of help. English will inevitably remain closely engaged as PM with housing issues** – as both the architect of social housing policy and because he needs to win Auckland at the general election next year. **Amy Adams is also now freed up from her more technocratic communications portfolio to take on social housing and social investment.** As an Associate Finance Minister with **Simon Bridges**, she effectively enters the new inner Cabinet. Reviving the **infrastructure portfolio for Steven Joyce** reflects the large new allocation for public works in the latest Budget Policy Statement.

## A refreshed 'kitchen Cabinet'

Where this was previously Key, English, Steven Joyce, Murray McCully and Gerry Brownlee, **the English administration's 'kitchen Cabinet' is: English, Bennett, Joyce, Brownlee, Adams and Bridges.**

That is a more significant rejuvenation at the top of the Cabinet than might initially meet the eye, and **puts Adams, Bennett and Bridges on a fast track to challenge for leader after English.** Note that Bennett has added police and women to her portfolios, the latter dragged from outside Cabinet to second spot, and police being a major political portfolio. She retains climate change and takes over from Key in tourism, while also taking the role of go-between with a more activist caucus.

Bridges, at 5th in the Cabinet now, relinquishes energy to Judith Collins, while picking up Adams's communications responsibilities, Joyce's economic development portfolio, and retaining transport.

**Jonathan Coleman**, by comparison, is relatively harshly treated. A pretender for the leadership over the last fortnight, the fact he has kept the same portfolios as before and drops one place in the rankings is the **political equivalent of English saying: "don't get ahead of yourself".**

Coleman was widely tipped for the foreign affairs portfolio, which it's believed he would welcome and would have some appropriate qualifications for. When McCully steps down, Coleman appears a likely choice. **Michael Woodhouse** rises from 17th to ninth in the Cabinet, but his immigration, labour and health and safety

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changes are little-changed, beyond picking up ACC. English singled him out as an up and comer at the Cabinet announcement. **Could he replace Coleman in health, come May?** While **Nikki Kaye would seem a natural replacement for Parata in education**, that will depend on how her cancer treatment goes. As Minister for Youth Affairs and associate education minister, she is effectively in a place-holder position for the moment. **Paul Goldsmith** becomes an understudy to Joyce, taking on the science and innovation and tertiary portfolios, the latter an area of pre-parliamentary work experience, Goldsmith having advised then University of Auckland vice-chancellor John Hood on communications in the early 2000s.

**Newcomers**

Entering the inner Cabinet at 21st ranking, **Alfred Ngaro** effectively replaces Sam Lotu I'iga as the only Pasifika face in the new Cabinet, and is one of the so-called 'four amigos' who stirred up the leadership vote after Key's resignation. Also from that group, but outside Cabinet, is **Mark Mitchell**, currently chair of the foreign affairs and defence committee, who picks Land Information (i.e., OIO) from Louise Upston. **Jacqui Dean**, chair of the justice and electoral select committee, replaces Paul Goldsmith in the commerce and consumer affairs portfolios. **David Bennett**, chair of the finance and expenditure select committee, becomes Minister of Veterans Affairs and Food Safety, one of two portfolios freed up by the only Cabinet sacking – **Jo Goodhew**. She may yet turn up as a whip or Deputy Speaker.

**What next?**

In the May 'transition' reshuffle, the current 21-member **Cabinet will shrink back to the usual 20** ministerial posts and outside Cabinet will return to five from the current four. That opens up a couple of spots for new faces, possibly more if other senior MPs decide to retire. Select committee chairmanships may now be in prospect for **2014 intake MPs** Chris Bishop, currently deputy chair of finance and expenditure; former Fonterra senior executive **Todd Muller**, who would need to see off the low-key Shane Reti to chair the foreign affairs and trade committee; and perhaps former farmer activist **Barbara Kuriger**, currently deputy chair of the health select committee. **Scott Simpson**, chair of the local govt and environment select committee, and a 2011 alumnus, might also seek advancement.

**The new Cabinet by portfolio and ranking**

*(previous rank in brackets, italicised = outside Cabinet)*

**1/ Bill English** (2): Prime Minister; National Security and Intelligence, Ministerial Services; **2/ Paula Bennett** (5): Deputy PM; Women; State Services; Police; Tourism; Climate Change; **3/ Steven Joyce** (4): Finance, Infrastructure; **4/ Gerry Brownlee** (3): Chch regeneration; EQC; Defence; Civil Defence; Leader of the House; **5/ Simon Bridges** (9): Economic Development; Transport, Communications; Dep Leader of the House; Assoc Finance; **6/ Amy Adams** (7): Justice; Courts; Social Housing; Social Investment; Housing NZ; Assoc Finance; **7/ Jonathan Coleman** (6): Health; Sport and Recreation; **8/ Chris Finlayson** (8): A-G; Treaty Negotiations; NZSIS and GCSB; Assoc Maori Development; **9/ Michael Woodhouse** (17) Immigration; Workplace Relations and Safety; ACC; **10/ Anne Tolley** (11): Children (new); Social Development; Local Govt; **11/ Hekia Parata** (10): Education (*till May*); **12/Nathan Guy** (15): Primary Industries, Racing, Assoc Econ Dev; **13/ Murray McCully** (13): Foreign Affairs (*till May*); **14/ Nikki Kaye** (16): Youth; Assoc Education; **15/ Nick Smith** (12): Environment; Building and Construction (renamed); **16/ Judith Collins** (14): Revenue; Energy and Resources; Ethnic Communities; **17/ Todd McClay** (18): Trade, SOEs; **18/ Maggie Barry** (20): Arts, Culture, Heritage; Conservation; Seniors; **19/ Paul Goldsmith** (25): Tertiary Education; Science and Innovation; Regulatory Reform; **20/ Louise Upston** (24): Corrections; Assoc Education, Primary Industries, Tertiary Ed, Skills and Employment; **21/ Alfred Ngaro**: Pacific Peoples, Community and Voluntary Sector; Assoc Children, Social Housing; **22/ Nicky Wagner** (23): Customs; Disability Issues; Assoc Conservation, Health, Tourism; **23/ Mark Mitchell**: Land Information, Statistics, Assoc Justice; **24/ Jacqui Dean**: Commerce and Consumer Affairs; Small Business; Assoc ACC, Local Govt; **25/ David Bennett**: Veterans' Affairs; Food Safety; Assoc Immigration, Transport; **26/ Peter Dunne**: (Support Party Minister) Internal Affairs, Assoc Conservation, Health; **27/ Te Ururoa Flavell**: (Support Party Minister) Maori Development, Whanau Ora, Assoc Economic Development; **28/ David Seymour**: Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Education & Regulatory Reform. 