

Departments trim their PR teams

Positions down nearly 15% on four years ago... but Treasury and others defy trend

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The number of public relations and communications staff in most government departments has dropped in the past four years – with some notable exceptions, including the Treasury – according to a Cabinet paper on public service staffing.

Overall, communications positions (full-time equivalents) have fallen by 14.34 per cent from December 2008 to last December, with some exceptions.

The number of Treasury communications positions increased

from 2.9 to 4.9. The number of Statistics New Zealand staff increased heavily last year but that was in the build-up to the Census this year.

The Serious Fraud Office took on one position where it had none before, and the Department of Prime Minister and the Cabinet increased from one to two.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs has had the biggest reduction in communications positions, from 5.2 to 0.9, a drop of 82.69 per cent.

Treasury communications manager Anna Symmans said that after the global financial crisis Treasury took on a greater number of functions such as the deposit guarantee

Public service PR

Number of positions, full-time equivalents*

Down

Women's affairs	5.2 to 0.9
Transport	9.4 to 3.5
State Services Comm	5.7 to 3
Environment	9.3 to 5
Health	11.7 to 6.3
Land Information	9.9 to 6
Education	19.4 to 12.6
Conservation	16.4 to 11

Up

Treasury	2.9 to 4.9
Prime Minister and Cabinet	1 to 2
Culture and Heritage	2.5 to 4

* December 2008 to December 2012

scheme and more responsibilities under the Crown Ownership Monitoring Unit "and we needed to grow with the business".

The National Party in Opposition made a big point of criticising the Labour-led government for a growth in communications staff.

Once it gained power in 2008, it became government policy to not only put a cap on core administration roles in the public service but to cut communications staff.

The total number of communications and public relations (full-time equivalents) was 275.2 at the end of last year.

Four years earlier it was 321.3 (2008); 269.4 (2009); 267.8 (2010); and 270 (2011).

The 275.2 total includes six extra staff at the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority, which had one communications position at the end

of 2011, six by June last year and 12 by the end of last year.

The number of communications staff after the July merger that created the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment is 36.2 which is 12.98 per cent lower than the 41.6 staff in the four separate departments in 2008 (Department of Building and Housing, Ministry of Economic Development, Department of Labour, and Ministry of Science and Innovation).

The State Services Commission, which prepared the Cabinet paper on public service staffing, led by example in reducing its staff from 5.7 in late 2008 to three last December.

The figures include jobs and vacancies so they indicate the number of positions, rather than jobs held.

Focus on savings, Budget preview
A10



Singer Jackie Thomas hopes she can repay her supporters' faith which is to thank for her return to *The X Factor*.

Fans believe Greymouth singer has the X Factor

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After a strong public reaction and a social media campaign to bring her back, contestant Jackie Thomas has returned to *The X Factor*.

After the Greymouth singer was culled at the boot camp part of the competition, a Facebook page was set up that urged the producers to put her back on the talent show and said the judges had made "the worst decision of their career".

Almost 8500 people liked the page and last night they saw their dream realised. One person said they

stopped watching the show when they threw Thomas out.

"I knew if they got it this wrong this early on... it wasn't going to get much better," the person said in a post on the Facebook page.

Thomas, 22, was "blown away" by the response from the public. "Now I just hope I can do them proud at the judges' retreats."

She impressed the judges at her audition with a rendition of *Skinny Love* by Bon Iver and got a standing ovation from the audience. She was given four yes votes and described afterwards by Mel Blatt as being "a performance from the winner of *X*

Factor". However, she let nerves get the better of her at boot camp and was one of 36 acts that were sent home on day two, after a disappointing performance at Vector Arena.

After she was booted off, she said in an interview with TV3 that she knew straight away that what she did wasn't good enough and that she was upset but not surprised at the judges' decision.

The guest mentors were also revealed last night – singer and Australian *X Factor* judge Guy Sebastian helped the boys, Hollie Smith joined the over-25s, S Club 7 member Rachel Stevens helped Blatt with the groups

and Natasha Bedingfield paired up with her brother Daniel.

Stevens said this was her first visit back to New Zealand since they toured here with the band. She said it was an exciting week during the judges' retreats and that it was great fun to be part of the show.

"I got quite nostalgic seeing the young bands enjoying themselves, creating new styles and sounds. It was lovely to be part of."

"I had a great time in S Club and know how much they've got to look forward to. Being back in New Zealand, albeit briefly, was a pleasure and I'm excited for Mel and for the show."

Waiheke inn rated with best in world

Natalie Akoorie

A New Zealand hotel has been named in the 2013 *It List* for *Travel & Leisure* magazine.

The Oyster Inn on Waiheke Island is number 28 of the 61 coolest new hotels worldwide, ranking alongside properties such as The Peninsula in Hong Kong and the Mandarin Oriental in Guangzhou, China.

Owners Andrew Glenn and Jonathan Rutherford Best opened The Oyster Inn, a boutique hotel with three bedrooms, a small private function room, a restaurant and a beachwear shop, in November last year.

Mr Glenn, 40, said the honour was a coup for the hotel, which would feature in the June issue of the magazine in America.

"We're just overwhelmed and so thrilled to be part of such a prestigious group of properties around the world."

The inn, the only New Zealand hotel to make the list, was named in the beach category. Other categories included city, rustic, renovation and resort.

The pair came across the upstairs premises in Oneroa a month after they returned to Auckland, having worked in hospitality and fashion marketing in London.

"We decided to throw caution to the wind and follow our dreams and decided to change our lives completely and move to New Zealand."

Mr Glenn, who grew up in Hong Kong with a Chinese mother and Kiwi father, said they were immediately drawn to the idea of a restaurant with rooms, and added a shop to create a mini-resort atmosphere.

"I think we were one of the first people on the island to combine a restaurant with accommodation and retail. We tried to combine the elements you love having when you go to a resort."

They used interior designer Katie Lockhart, whose work includes Karen Walker stores, and hired returning New Zealand chef Cristian Hossack from Peter Gordon's Providores restaurant in London.

It's the second accolade the inn has received in as many months after it was named in *Metro* magazine's top 50 restaurants for 2013.

Mr Glenn said a world-class hotel was about personalising the experience.

"We like to think of The Oyster Inn as our home. We treat our guests as we would our friends and not just as clients. It's about going the extra mile to make sure everyone is happy."

Family: Liner fall 'tragic accident'

The family of a young woman presumed dead after falling from a cruise ship last week say she was not drinking beforehand and do not believe it was anything more than a tragic accident.

Kristen Schroder and her boyfriend Paul Rossington are presumed drowned after going over the railing of the Carnival Spirit off the New South Wales coast last Wednesday.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported Ms Schroder's family were angry about rumours the fall was anything other than a tragic accident.

I believe Paul jumped in to save her without having a chance to think clearly and call for help.

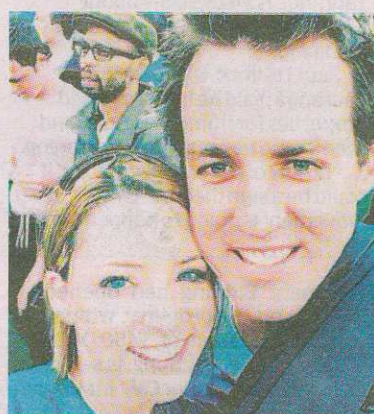
Sascha Peruoco, Kristen Schroder's brother-in-law

"It has been upsetting to read the media reporting that Kristen jumped off the Carnival Spirit cruise ship willingly. I want to make one thing absolutely clear... neither of them

had been drinking and I do not for one minute believe Kristen would take her own life," said Sascha Peruoco, Ms Schroder's brother-in-law.

"She was up on that railing (for reasons only her and Paul will know) when she lost her grip and slipped backwards. I believe Paul jumped in to save her without having a chance to think clearly and call for help."

AAP reported the couple had been recorded on CCTV footage arguing in the hours before the incident but that they had appeared to reconcile.



Kristen Schroder and her boyfriend Paul Rossington. Picture / ABC