



22 JAN 2020

Dear [REDACTED]

On 3 October 2019, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information for the last five years, broken into the following three categories:

- *Air Travel*
- *Packaging and Recycling, and*
- *Encouraging good behaviour and attunement with the natural world*

Your questions are italicised and responded to in turn below.

- *How many of your staff has travelled by air (obviously with all of these I mean where the agency has paid for it) and how many the total flights were and how much it cost all up.*

Please see Table One below which shows the number and cost of flights taken in the Domestic and International markets. This is broken down by financial year for the last five years.

Table One: Number and cost of flights broken down by Financial year and market.

Market	Financial Year									
	2014/2015		2015/2016		2016/2017		2017/2018		2018/2019	
	Number of Flights	cost (\$000)								
Domestic	26,292	\$4,687	26,694	\$4,454	29,301	\$4,884	31,070	\$5,463	28,241	\$5,076
International	164	\$0,158	149	\$0,187	148	\$0,129	217	\$0,176	114	\$0,113
Trans-Tasman	286	\$0,084	186	\$0,056	159	\$0,044	184	\$0,059	137	\$0,042
Total	26,742	\$4,931	27,029	\$4,697	29,608	\$5,057	31,471	\$5,698	28,492	\$5,231

Please note this table refers to the total number of flights and may include instances where one staff member has flown multiple times.

- *What was the purpose and benefit to the taxpayer of each trip?*

The Ministry is unable to provide a purpose and benefit analysis for each flight in the last five years as these details are not centrally recorded. Locating this information would require reviewing individual booking documents and the Ministry would need to divert personnel from their core duties and allocate extra time to complete this task. The diversion of these resources would impair the Ministry's ability to continue standard operations and would be an inefficient use of the Ministry's resources. As such, your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act, requires substantial collation. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your requests given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

- *For each trip why was a remote alternative not used? Like for conferences a lot of them have remote viewing dial ins so you don't have to travel to attend. Meetings can usually be done by conference call or skype. Things like that. So, there are very few situations where staff would actually have to travel by air. So, in cases where you have could you explain if there was no remote alternative available? And if there was why was it not used?*

The Ministry ensures it balances the travel purposes with financial and environmental accountability, which is why the Ministry has specific policies relating to air travel.

The Ministry has over 7,000 staff, working in over 150 locations around New Zealand and in our National Office in Wellington. Domestic travel is necessary for many reasons including:

- enabling staff to deliver services across the regions,
- enabling staff to represent Central Government working with applicants, stakeholders and the community, and
- providing coaching to local leaders and staff, with a focus of building sustained leadership capability to meaningfully improve social services to New Zealanders.

On occasions, Ministry staff need to travel overseas to fulfil business purposes with the majority of overseas travel being to Australia. Sharing information and learning from best practice across jurisdictions helps to make sure our services remain effective.

Airline travel by Ministry staff is covered by the Ministry's Travel, Accommodation and Related Expenses Policy, and is approved by budget managers with the appropriate delegated financial authority. This policy requires that any spending on travel takes into account the following principles:

- any spending on travel and accommodation must be justified for business purposes, moderate, and economical having regard to purpose, distance, time, urgency, personal health, safety and security and costs
 - in the interest of cost effectiveness, consideration should be given to using the most economical fares and accommodation, including travelling during off-peak hours, using discounted fares and retaining flexibility on return travel
 - alternatives to travel must also be considered, such as using video and/or telephone conferences.
- *When staff are travelling there are extra expenses too. How much has been spent on accommodation and for how many people and nights in these times too?*

Please see Table Two below which shows the number of nights, and total cost of accommodation broken down by market and financial year.

Table Two: Number of nights, and cost broken down by financial year and market.

Market	Financial Year									
	2014/2015		2015/2016		2016/2017		2017/2018		2018/2019	
	Number of Nights	Cost (\$000)								
Domestic	19,344	\$2,363	18,919	\$2,417	18,397	\$2,398	19,931	\$2,772	18,083	\$2,553
International	128	\$0,042	133	\$0,053	57	\$0,019	204	\$0,064	125	\$0,048
Trans-Tasman	209	\$0,049	134	\$0,036	106	\$0,028	215	\$0,055	101	\$0,023
Total	19,681	\$2,454	19,186	\$2,507	18,560	\$2,446	20,350	\$2,891	18,309	\$2,624

- *How much on other expenses like meals and allowances?*

Please see Table Three which shows expenses associated with accommodation broken down by financial year for the last five financial years. Figures are rounded to the nearest \$1,000.

Table Three: Hotel Charges broken down by Financial Year.

Category	Financial Year				
	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Car parking	\$7,000	\$15,000	\$17,000	\$25,000	\$22,000
Conference & Business	\$2,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$0
Food & Beverages	\$294,000	\$311,000	\$374,000	\$419,000	\$421,000
Miscellaneous	\$1,000	\$0	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$0
Total	\$304,000	\$327,000	\$393,000	\$446,000	\$444,000

Please note that this table only includes charges made to the hotel as this is the only way the Ministry records data for specific costs. Please also note the Food & Beverages category does not include alcoholic beverages as the Travel, Accommodation, and Related Expenses Policy does not allow staff to claim for alcoholic beverages.

- *Do staff of different jobs/ranks/levels get different types or levels of accommodation. If so can you explain why?*

The Ministry has one Travel, Accommodation, and Related Expenses Policy. This policy applies to all staff regardless of their role.

- *Going into the future do you have plans to reduce air travel? If you do could you explain these plans and if you have set any targets for it and things.*

The Ministry's airline travel may be affected by future government policy directives, one of which is to: 'Support the transition to a net zero emissions economy and assist the Government to meet its goal of significant reduction in waste by 2020 and beyond.' Additionally, the Ministry incorporates the Government Procurement Rules in considering how airline travel is managed. You can find more information

regarding Government Procurement Rules here: www.procurement.govt.nz/assets/procurement-property/documents/government-procurement-rules.pdf

The Ministry has recently joined the Air New Zealand FlyNeutral carbon credit offset programme to help mitigate or reduce the impact its air travel has on the environment. This enables the Ministry to purchase carbon credits from certified emissions reductions projects that permanently avoid or remove carbon from the atmosphere. You can find more information about the Air New Zealand FlyNeutral carbon credit offset programme on the Air New Zealand website here: www.airnewzealand.co.nz/sustainability-customer-carbon-offset#about

The Ministry is always looking for ways to reduce costs including how we can better utilise technology to facilitate meetings rather than travelling. However, as one of the largest public service organisations in New Zealand and with a strong local presence across New Zealand, there will always be a need for some travel to continue.

Packaging and Recycling:

- *Do you have recycling facilities in all of your premises? If you do not please explain why.*
- *Do you actively encourage or make your staff recycle? If you do please explain how.*
- *Do you have rules aimed at encouraging other staff environmentally friendly behaviour such as banning staff from bringing disposable cups onto the premises?*

The Ministry has recycling bins at sites for office paper recycling which are well used by staff. Where possible, and where Councils provide recycling activities, the Ministry proactively encourages recycling, specifically in areas of cardboard, plastics, organic waste, glass, toner and disks and electronic media disposal. Where Council or similar recycling/sustainable practices are not provided (for example in smaller locations), practices are regionally based. The Ministry also provides reusable crockery and cutlery in all offices.

- *If you have cafes or similar things in your premises do you require them to use environmentally healthy options such a re-usable cutlery and recyclable packaging?*

The Ministry does not typically have cafes within our premises. Any cafes that share the premises will be contracted by the buildings' landlords and we are not privy to the contractual arrangements including recycling or sustainable practice requirements.

The Ministry does have arrangements with cafe service providers in two sites and in these cases the providers follow the recycling practices for that site as outlined above.

Encouraging Good Behaviour and Attunement with the natural world:

- *Do all of your offices have plants? If so, what is the ratio of plants to workers? Do you ensure that providers that look after the plants use sustainable and environmentally friendly options in their practices (for example pesticide choices)?*

Greenery is located throughout the National Office buildings. It is selected and located to minimise any impact for allergy sufferers. Personal plants and flowers being added to the office could undermine this and have adverse effects on staff, and as such are prohibited. There is no policy in place for other Ministry sites, such as Service Centres and Contact Centres. These locations can choose whether or not to provide plants in the workspaces or other spaces.

- *Do you have Programmes for encouraging your staff to make more environmentally friendly choices outside of work?*
- *Do you encourage your staff to be more interconnected with the natural world by hosting or promoting practices such as mindfulness, meditation, earthing or Tai Chi?*
- *Do you take any steps to increase staff knowledge and awareness of environmental issues in general?*

The Ministry expects staff behaviour to align with the Ministry's Code of Conduct but outside of this, the Ministry does not control or influence the behaviour of its staff outside of work.

The Ministry promotes practices to help staff to manage high workloads and stress, and this has included mindfulness content.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

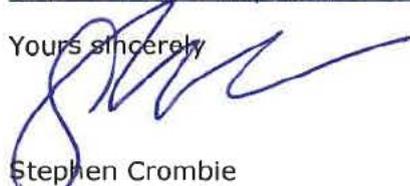
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding air travel, packaging and recycling, and encouraging good behaviour and attunement with the natural world, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Crombie
Deputy Chief Executive People and Capability