

9 February 2022

Dear

On 15 November 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Could you please send me the amount of the total spend on alcohol for your agency/ministry for the 20/21 financial year?*
- *Your agency's/Ministry's policy on alcohol consumption during work hours/at work functions.*

On 13 December 2021, the Ministry advised you that more time was required to respond to your request.

The Ministry cannot provide a breakdown of the amount spent on alcohol, since such expenditures are not recorded in any designated accounts in the Ministry's Financial Accounting System. The Ministry would have to manually review thousands of transactions and receipts. 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 for the amount the Ministry has spent on alcohol for the financial years 2020/2021 is refused under section 18(f) of the Act as it requires substantial collation.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request 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.

According to the Ministry's Financial Policy on entertainment and hospitality expenditure, all expenditure on alcohol and meals is a personal expense except as set out below:

- Entertainment meals and alcohol – external stakeholders/guests

- Alcohol in moderation is acceptable when entertaining external guests in an official capacity, or the Ministry's organised events and functions for external stakeholders.
  - Expenditure on alcohol should be considered an infrequent event and normally only purchased to accompany a meal.
  - Any expenditure on meals must be reasonable and deemed appropriate in relation to the event, taking into account the nature of the function, number of guests, and any cultural considerations.
- Ministry events, lunches and dinners
    - Alcohol may be allowed at certain Ministry events such as conferences organised by the Ministry and strategic planning workshops. Approval before the event is required from the appropriate delegated manager.

Additionally, please find enclosed, copies of the Ministry's Drug and Alcohol policy (substance misuse) and Drug and Alcohol (substance misuse) procedures.

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
- 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. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter and attachments 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](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding the Ministry's expenditure and policy on alcohol and its consumption, 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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'ML' with a large loop at the top.

Mark Painter  
**General Manager, Health Safety and Security  
Strategy and Risk**