



25 July 2022

Tēnā koe

On 27 June 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *When I worked for WINZ many years ago as a student (about 1996?), the ministry implemented unlimited sick leave. Is there any assessment of how effective this was, whether it was abused, and why that policy was ended?*

The Ministry interprets your reference to “unlimited sick leave” to mean unspecified sick leave. No formal assessment of the effectiveness or abuse of unspecified sick leave has been conducted by the Ministry.

I have been unable to locate the Ministry’s Employment Agreements from 1996, which would confirm the sick leave provisions at that time, as this information was not centrally nor electronically stored at that time.

The information we have been able to locate indicates that the Ministry’s sick leave provisions in the Work and Income and Specialist Services Employment Agreement changed in 2002 from “unspecified sick leave after two years” to “specified sick leave”, with a payment in recognition of the change made to employees who moved to the new employment agreement. The information indicates that this change was a result of a Public Service Association (PSA) bargaining claim which aimed to achieve “a clear consistently applied system that ensures all members are fairly supported when they are unable to be at work due to sickness”. The information also indicates that people on an Individual Employment Agreement who did not agree to the new employment agreement would remain on their current employment agreement (and retain the unspecified sick leave provision after two years’ service) but would not be able to access any of the new provisions in the proposed collective agreements.

The Ministry currently has an unspecified sick leave provision for a specific portion of our employees who are on a Managers and Senior Specialists Employment Agreement. For employees covered by this employment agreement, sick leave for personal illness is granted on an as and when

required basis. The employment agreement states that a staff member "will be paid [their] relevant daily pay when [they] are absent due to personal illness, provided that ongoing payment may be reviewed and reduced if absences are lengthy or excessive."

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. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry'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, 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.

Ngā mihi nui



Rob Gold
**Acting Group General Manager
People**