



17 January 2023

Tēnā koe

On 29 November 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *The total budget for your department's Christmas party/parties for 2022 and 2021. Please separate costs for each year.*
- *The number of parties that were or will be held in each year.*
- *The number of staff who attended (or are expected to attend) each year's party/parties.*
- *The location of the venue/s for each year.*
- *A breakdown of the costs by expense type for each year's party/parties, including (where applicable) but not limited to the following:*
 - *Accommodation*
 - *Catering (e.g., beverages, crockery, food, glassware)*
 - *Consultation with relevant stakeholders*
 - *Decorations (e.g., Christmas tree, lights)*
 - *Entertainment (e.g., guest speaker/s, live music)*
 - *Planning*
 - *Travel to and from the venue (e.g., bus hire, flights)*
 - *Venue*

The Ministry contributes up to \$20 per person for the purpose of attending an end-of-year Christmas function. The \$20 contribution is a one-off payment and is not an allowance. It is not available for consultants and contractors or for staff not attending the organised function/event. This one-off payment commenced in the 2001/2002 financial year and has not been changed since this time.

On 22 December 2022, the Ministry held a National Office Christmas morning tea in the National Office building. The total catering cost of this morning tea was \$13,371.20, including GST. The expected number of attendees for this event was 1600 staff members.

On 20 and 21 December 2021, the Ministry held a National Office Christmas morning tea in the National Office building. The total catering cost of this morning tea was \$2880.32, including GST. The expected number of attendees for this event was 1300 staff members. Please note that due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Ministry adapted the delivery of the morning tea to keep everyone safe. To do this, the morning tea was on a smaller scale and distributed across each individual floor by the Ministry's Leadership team.

I am unable to provide a further breakdown of end-of-year functions across the Ministry. In order to provide you with the number of parties held, the number of staff in attendance, the location and venue of each party, 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 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.

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 regarding end-of-year Christmas functions, 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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'BY', is positioned above the typed name.

Brad Young
Group General Manager
Finance