



24 May 2023

Tēnā koe

On 11 April 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

1. *Does your department provide office space to a Union?*
 - *If yes, which Union is it and do they pay for the office space?*
 - *If yes, how much does the Union pay for the office space?*
If no, what is the rental value of the office space given to Union?
2. *Please provide us with your department's current working from home policy.*
3. *How much does the department pay to rent its offices?*
4. *What is the current staffing occupancy level of your offices?*
5. *How much has the department spent on stationary in the last 12 months? Please provide a breakdown of costs.*
6. *How much does the department spend on newspaper and magazine subscriptions? Please provide a breakdown of costs.*

On 10 May 2023, the Ministry informed you that a decision had been made to grant your request in part, however, more time was required to prepare the information for release.

I will now respond to your questions in turn.

1. *Does your department provide office space to a Union?*
 - *If yes, which Union is it and do they pay for the office space?*
 - *If yes, how much does the Union pay for the office space?*
If no, what is the rental value of the office space given to Union?

The Ministry does not provide office space to a union. Union officials and Ministry staff members who are also union delegates may occasionally use

Ministry meeting rooms for union related meetings. The union does not pay the Ministry for this.

2. Please provide us with your department's current working from home policy.

The Ministry's current working from home policy is published in an Official Information Act response from 31 January 2023, at the following link: www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/official-information-responses/2023/january/31012023-information-on-the-ministry-s-working-from-home-policy-including-percentage-working-money-spent-on-equipment-and-how-much-paid-for-office-space.pdf.

3. How much does the department pay to rent its offices?

As at 31 March 2023 the annual cost of rent for all Ministry occupied space was \$44,004,811.

4. What is the current staffing occupancy level of your offices?

The Ministry has interpreted your request to be for the staffing occupancy level of the Ministry as a whole. Please contact the Ministry if this was not the intent of your request.

The Ministry supports various flexible working arrangements which may include the ability for people to work from home, which may vary the occupancy at a particular time. Many flexible working arrangements are informal and agreed between managers and individual staff as and when needed, so the number of staff who work in the office or from home is highly variable on any given day.

Further, the Ministry does not have specific workplace utilisation software. Managers of individual staff are expected to be aware of where staff are working. Staff are also expected to record if they are working from home as per their individual agreement with their manager, to ensure they can be accounted for in the event of a major disaster or similar.

In the notification of decision sent to you on 10 May 2023, the Ministry stated that this question would be refused under section 18(g) as the information was not held.

However, upon further discussion, the Ministry has decided to instead refuse this information under section 18(f) of the Act, as substantial manual collation would be required to collate the information required to provide a representative number of Ministry wide office occupancy levels.

The greater public service is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service. 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.

5. How much has the department spent on stationery in the last 12 months? Please provide a breakdown of costs.

The Ministry's stationery and consumables expenditure for the financial year to date 30 April 2023 is \$2,763,137 (1 July 2022 to April 2023). These costs also include consumable products such as milk and face masks.

Due to the volume of transactions involved, substantial manual collation would be required to separate stationery from consumables to provide a breakdown of stationery costs. As such, I am refusing your request under section 18(f) of the Act. 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 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.

The following table shows the total spend on stationery and consumables, broken down by month for the period 1 July 2022 – 30 April 2023.

Stationery and consumables expenditure 1 July 2022 – 30 April 2023	
Month	Amount
July 2022	\$246,898
August 2022	\$368,299
September 2022	\$289,597
October 2022	\$253,613
November 2022	\$274,836
December 2022	\$269,952
January 2023	\$229,976
February 2023	\$272,889
March 2023	\$328,281
April 2023	\$228,795
Total	\$2,763,137

6. How much does the department spend on newspaper and magazine subscriptions? Please provide a breakdown of costs.

For the period 1 July 2022 – 30 April 2023, the Ministry’s expenditure on newspaper and magazine subscriptions was \$787.92. The following table provides a breakdown of these costs by month:

Newspaper and magazine subscription expenditure 1 July 2022 – 30 April 2023	
Month	Amount
July 2022	\$645.65
February 2023	\$66.17
March 2023	\$76.10
Total	\$787.92

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



Magnus O’Neill
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