

10 May 2023

[REDACTED]
New Zealand Taxpayers' Union
[REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 11 April 2023 in which you asked:

- *“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?*”*
- *Please provide us with your department’s current working from home policy.*
- *How much does the department pay to rent its offices?*
- *What is the current staffing occupancy level of your offices?*
- *How much has the department spent on stationary in the last 12 months? Please provide a breakdown of costs.*
- *How much does the department spend on newspaper and magazine subscriptions? Please provide a breakdown of costs”*

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

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?*

Response: As an organisation we (DOC) do not provide office space to any Union.

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

Response: As per our previous response to the Taxpayers Union on this matter being OIAD-2597, the following working from home policy continues to apply:

Our Senior Leadership Team is committed to enabling flexible work across our organisation where reasonable to do so. We consider such action to be reasonable and in alignment with



the Government's 'flexible by default' 2020 goal. Under our Flexible Work Arrangements Policy (Policy), we have committed to enabling our staff to work flexibly where possible. This action aligns with our goal to create flexible work arrangements that properly balance the needs of individuals and teams in a manner which does not compromise the operational requirements of our organisation. Our definition of flexible work, under our Policy, includes an employee requesting to change their place of work (e.g., asking to work from home) and / or their work pattern.

Our Policy allows employees to formally request to work from home part time or full time, on a regular basis. Approval requests are informed by our Flexible Work Standard Operating Procedure (FWSOP) which requires employees and managers to conduct a health and safety review. This ensures that their working from home space is suitably set up to prevent injury or wellbeing issues. Both managers and employees are able to access guidance and resources on how to set up efficient and effective flexible work arrangements on our intranet pages. In addition to the above health and safety considerations, our FWSOP requires managers to consider a variety of factors before approval is provided. Common factors considered include:

- whether the staff member can continue to conduct their role effectively in a flexi-work environment,
- whether the staff member can continue to connect and collaborate with others sufficiently, and
- whether the staff member's well-being is likely to improve or be compromised in any way from a flexi-work agreement.

Managers are encouraged to explore options to reach a mutually beneficial arrangement that works for both the employee and DOC.

In November 2022, we informed our staff that employees in office-based roles are required to work from our business offices at least 3 days per week (unless a well-considered flexible work arrangement already exists). This approach is driven by a desire to ensure that we utilise our office spaces appropriately and foster in-person collaboration. We are currently preparing additional hybrid working guidance for our employees and leaders to ensure that any hybrid or working from home arrangements work well operationally and help us foster our desired collaborative culture.

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

Response: To the year ending June 2023, the Department will have paid \$8,206,542 for office rent.

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

Response: While occupancy rates were tracked for some of our offices through 2022, when Covid was prevalent, we no longer collect data on staff occupancy rates and this has been the case since September 2022. As your question relates to "current staffing occupancy levels", this aspect of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act as the information requested does not exist.

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



Response: From 1 April 2022 through to 31 March 2023, the Department has spent a total of \$200,140.15 on stationery, as per table below.

Month	Amount
Apr-22	10,632.22
May-22	21,654.44
Jun-22	17,555.74
FY 2021/2022	49,842.40
Jul-22	493.27
Aug-22	5,288.02
Sep-22	19,620.04
Oct-22	34,521.55
Nov-22	32,406.79
Dec-22	3,653.97
Jan-23	8,363.77
Feb-23	31,936.89
Mar-23	14,013.45
FY 2022/2023	150,297.75
Grand Total	200,140.15

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

Response: From 1 April 2022 through to 31 March 2023, the Department has spent a total of \$3,481.39 on subscriptions, as per table below.

Month	Amount
Apr-22	217.56
May-22	227.78
Jun-22	832.61
FY 2021/2022	1,277.95
Jul-22	111.28
Aug-22	1,027.13
Sep-22	186.78
Oct-22	559.13
Nov-22	-
Dec-22	-
Jan-23	-
Feb-23	94.78
Mar-23	224.34
FY 2022/2023	2,203.44
Grand Total	3,481.39



You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) may be published on the Department's website.

Nāku noa, nā



CJ Juby
Director, Business Services
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai