

28 November 2022

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OIA 28399

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I refer to your email of 8 November 2022 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

- 1) *How many days' of annual leave or paid time off (such as departmental holidays or supplementary leave), in excess of the statutory four weeks leave, do your staff receive?*
- 2) *When was the amount of annual leave or paid time off (in excess of four weeks) allocated to each employee last increased?*
- 3) *If any additional leave or paid time off entitlements have been given in the past two years, please provide a reason as to why.*
- 4) *Please indicate whether they above additional entitlements are temporary or will continue next year and/or for the foreseeable future.*
- 5) *If different employees receive different entitlements to additional leave, please indicate the number of staff receiving each entitlement.
E.g., 5 Days - XX employees, 6 days - XX employees, 7 Days XX employees*
- 6) *What is the total annual cost of providing leave entitlements beyond the four weeks required by law?*
- 7) *If there has been additional entitlements in the past two years (e.g., an extra paid day off over the Christmas break), what is the estimated cost of providing this?*

Please find below our response to your request. We have numbered your questions for ease of reference.

Question 1

Employees at the Ministry are entitled to either 23 or 25 days Annual Leave (refer to table in question 6 for breakdown).

Question 2

Annual leave was last increased in 2009 for staff covered by the Collective Employment Agreement, and in 2011 for those who are not. The increase was to 23 days of annual leave for some staff and 25 for others with 3 of these days taken between Christmas and the New Year. This was not an overall increase in time off, just a renaming to remove reference to 'Ministry Days' in the collective agreement. The entitlement of up to 25 days annual leave was introduced in 2006. Ministry employees are required to have two years of Ministry experience to be eligible.

Question 3

The following additional paid time off entitlements have been provided or introduced over the past two years:

- Some offshore staff received, as a one off, five days of respite leave due to the workload generated by COVID-19. This respite leave must be taken by 31 December 2022.
- An end of assignment leave of up to 3 days was offered for staff who undertook a short or medium term assignment under the COVID-19 policy to provide backfill resource at posts so that offshore staff could take leave breaks.
- Family violence leave of up to 15 days per annum has been introduced in 2022. This leave is to enable staff to take the time needed to attend to any family violence issues that have arisen.
- In situations where staff had used all of their sick leave allocation, existing Special Paid Leave provisions were available for staff who contracted COVID-19, were caring for a dependant with COVID-19, were getting vaccinated, or were managing the effects of vaccination.

Question 4

These additional entitlements were temporary and will end this year with the exception of the COVID-19 Special Leave, and the end of short or medium-term assignment leave provisions. These provisions will continue for staff going to the mainland China posts until at least March 2023, when the situation in China will be further reviewed.

Question 5

For the respite leave, 321 staff were given the 5 days of entitlement. Across the Ministry 38 people were entitled to (and used) the up to 3 days of end of assignment leave, and a total of 147.5 days of Special Leave for COVID-19 was approved and paid.

Question 6

The Ministry is still working towards a payroll system that is fully compliant with the Holidays Act. To provide you an estimation for your request we have used a Daily Rate based on our most recently publically released average annual salary of NZ\$111,786.4 (as at 30th of June).

Annual Leave Entitlement Days	No. of Employees	Total Extra days	Total Cost at Daily Rate (\$454)
23.00	238	714	\$ 329,604
25.00	953	476	\$ 2,163,310
Total		5479	\$ 2,492,914

Question 7

As per our response to the previous question, please see the breakdown for a cost estimate for the additional leave.

Leave Type	Entitlement Days	No. of Employees	Total Cost at Daily Rate (\$ 454)
Respite Leave	5.00	321	\$ 728,670
End of Assignment Leave	38.00	3	\$ 51,756
Total			\$ 780,426

	Total Days Taken	Total Cost at Daily Rate (\$ 454)
Special Leave for COVID-19	147.50	\$ 66,965

Overall Total \$ 847,391

Please note that we may publish this letter (with your personal details redacted) on the Ministry’s website.

If you have any questions about this decision, you can contact us by email at: DM-ESD@mfat.govt.nz. You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision by contacting www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Sarah Corbett
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade