

22 December 2022

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OIA 28418

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I refer to your email of 29 November 2022 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

- 1) *What is Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's current working from home policy?*
- 2) *How many staff currently work from home at least some of the time? What percentage is this of total workforce?*
- 3) *How much has the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade spent on equipment / resources for staff to be able to work from home in 2022?*
- 4) *What does the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade pay per annum for any office space used by the department?*

Please find below our response to your request.

Question 1

Attached as Annex 1 is a copy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (the Ministry) Flexible Working policy. Many differing types of flexible working arrangements may be agreed at the Ministry. This includes flexibility in terms of when (hours), where (location), how (ways of working) and what (career patterns).

Question 2

As of 5 December 2022, a total of 20% or 248 out of 1198 employees, including staff based in New Zealand and seconded offshore at post, have disclosed that they have a flexible working arrangement in Success Factors, our Human Resources Information System.

Please note, the recording of flexible working arrangements is a voluntary process and the numbers provided are only an indication of the number of people with flexible working arrangements (which will include people who choose flexibility in work location).

Question 3

The amount spent by the Ministry on equipment and/or resources to support staff to work from home is not held centrally by the Ministry therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the OIA, as it would require substantial collation and research.

As noted above, the Ministry does not have a specific budget set aside for work from home equipment however, prior to the timeframe of your request, the Ministry did source equipment in bulk and distribute to staff as requested. Additionally, the Ministry reuses equipment as employees join or exit the organisation (i.e. if a staff member leaves the Ministry, the monitor they use to work from home will be reassigned to another staff member). This allows the Ministry to reduce costs and to ensure efficiency where possible.

Question 4

The Ministry's office space in Wellington consists of approximately 13,608m² for which approximately NZ\$6.031m was paid in financial year 2021/22.

Please note that we may publish this letter (with your personal details redacted) and enclosed documents 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SC', written in a cursive style.

Sarah Corbett
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Annex 1.

2. Flexible Working Arrangements

Purpose:

This policy sets out how flexible working operates in the Ministry and the expectations of managers, staff and teams.

Application:

This policy applies to all Ministry staff.

Principles:

- The Ministry enables a range of flexible working arrangements as the default across the network recognising the benefits that result, including:
 - increased staff engagement;
 - improved productivity and impact;
 - a more diverse and inclusive workforce; and
 - the promotion of kotahitanga and manaakitanga.
- Managers and staff have a shared responsibility to ensure flexible working operates effectively across the team, and for achieving business deliverables.
- Security, technology, privacy and other Ministry business standards underpin the way in which staff operate, whilst working flexibly.

Policy Statements:

Enabling Flexible Working Arrangements

1. Managers, staff and teams work together to enable flexible working arrangements taking into account the need to:
 - achieve business deliverables;
 - factor in differing working styles and preferences;
 - support high performance and career progression;
 - balance work with personal life;
 - make any required adjustments to the way the team is working;
 - maintain effective communication;
 - equip staff to work remotely and meet health and safety requirements;
2. Managers regularly review flexible working arrangements and make agreed adjustments with the staff member and the team, to ensure business deliverables are being met and the arrangements remain fit for purpose.

Requesting and Considering Flexible Working Arrangements

3. Many differing types of flexible working arrangements may be agreed. This includes flexibility in terms of when (hours), where (location), how (ways of working) and what (career patterns). These arrangements differ from irregular work flexibility, such as working from home to oversee a tradesperson.

[Document ID]

4. To determine how a request can be reasonably accommodated, proposals for flexible working should be discussed between the staff member and their manager, and then with the wider team.
5. If a manager receives a written request they must respond in writing and no later than one month after receipt. An agreed arrangement should be confirmed through an exchange of emails. Where there are changes in hours and consequently remuneration, the arrangement will need to be set out as a variation to the staff member's employment agreement. Payroll need to be notified of any compressed hours arrangements.
6. Some roles and/or locations are more suited to certain types of flexibility than others. Business deliverables may, for example, require staff to be available during certain hours of the day and/or in specific locations. Managers will advise any restrictions on flexibility, which may be for a temporary or lengthier period.
7. Staff who are affected by family violence have the right to access flexible working arrangements, in addition to or in lieu of any currently agreed arrangement.
8. If a manager requires staff to work in ways that differ from their employment agreement, (for example hours of work or location) this will need to be agreed between the parties.

Declining a Flexible Working Arrangement

9. If a manager is considering declining a flexible working arrangement proposal, this must firstly be discussed with their manager and with the staff member.
10. If a flexible work request is declined, the reasons must be in accordance with the Employment Relations Act, and set out in writing.
11. The staff member can seek a review of this decision. This review will be conducted by the one up manager, a manager from another division, and a member of the PEP Partnerships and Delivery Team. [Process for seeking a review](#)

New Appointees

12. When a new role is advertised, the default is that a flexible working arrangement will be able to be agreed or otherwise, any restrictions on working flexibly and the rationale for these must be included.
13. Prior to applying for a new role or on appointment, staff should establish with the hiring manager whether their current flexible working arrangement can continue in the new role or any adjustments that may be required.
14. When a staff member goes on a posting, a new flexible working arrangement will need to be agreed with the manager at post. The range of flexible working arrangements at post may be more limited, given the operating environment.

Staff Acting Up

15. Managers should assume that a staff member with a flexible working arrangement can act up. Staff may, however, need to adjust their arrangement in discussion with their manager and their team, to ensure they fulfil the requirements of the more senior role.

Resources:

Refer to the Human Resources Te Aka page on Flexible Working: [Pages - Flexible Working Policy](#)

[Remote working from overseas request form](#)

[Process for seeking a review](#)

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Official Information Act