



S9(2)(a)

Dear S9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 17 April 2023 to the Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry) requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

1. *I understand the recently appointed Secretary for the Environment and Ministry for the Environment Chief Executive, James Palmer lives in Hawkes Bay but travels to Wellington regularly for his role. Is this correct?*
2. *How often/regularly does Mr Palmer travel to Wellington for work? Would it be correct to say it's once a week?*
3. *Please specify how many flights Mr Palmer has made in his role for the Ministry for the Environment so far.*
4. *How much has the Ministry for the Environment spent on flights for Mr Palmer so far?*
5. *How much has the Ministry for the Environment spent on other forms of transport for Mr Palmer so far?*
6. *Were the environmental impacts of the emissions resulting from Mr Palmer's travel discussed or considered before his appointment in the role? Are the emissions being offset in any way?*
7. *I understand Mr Palmer has been appointed in the role for 5 years. Does Mr Palmer plan to live in Hawkes Bay and travel to Wellington for this whole tenure? Does he have plans to move to Wellington during his tenure?*

On 28 April 2023, the Ministry transferred points 6 and 7 of your request to the Public Service Commission (PSC) under section 14 of the Act. You will hear further from PSC regarding these two points of your request.

### Response to your request

I have sectioned out the remaining five points of your request and my responses are below:

1. **I understand the recently appointed Secretary for the Environment and Ministry for the Environment Chief Executive, James Palmer lives in Hawkes Bay but travels to Wellington regularly for his role. Is this correct?**
2. **How often/regularly does Mr Palmer travel to Wellington for work? Would it be correct to say it's once a week?**

Mr Palmer lives in both Wellington and Hawke's Bay and has residences in both locations.

Mr Palmer travels between Hawke's Bay and Wellington approximately once per week at his personal expense.

The Ministry's flexible-by-default approach means we have staff living and working across the motū, bringing a diverse range of perspectives to our work. Our flexible-by-default approach applies to all staff in our organisation and is standard practice across the public service. Common types of flexible working within the Ministry include:

- Flexible work hours
- Remote working – from home, or from another office location
- Job share.

**3. Please specify how many flights Mr Palmer has made in his role for the Ministry for the Environment so far.**

As of 1 May 2023, the Ministry's Financial Management Information System (FMIS) shows the Ministry has paid for nine flights for Mr Palmer in his role as Secretary for the Environment and Chief Executive, Ministry for the Environment.

In accordance with the Ministry's internal work travel policies, flights paid for by the Ministry were to enable Mr Palmer to attend stakeholder hui, events and conferences across the motū in his role as Secretary for the Environment and Chief Executive, not as part of Mr Palmer's personal travel from Hawke's Bay to Wellington.

Please note this information does not include flights for which an invoice is not yet recorded in the Ministry's FMIS.

**4. How much has the Ministry for the Environment spent on flights for Mr Palmer so far?**

As of 1 May 2023, the Ministry's FMIS shows the Ministry has spent \$1,685.22 GST excl. on flights for Mr Palmer.

As outlined above, in accordance with the Ministry's internal work travel policies, the flights paid for by the Ministry were to enable Mr Palmer to attend stakeholder hui, events and conferences across the motū in his role as Secretary for the Environment and Chief Executive, not as part of Mr Palmer's personal travel from Hawke's Bay to Wellington.

Please note, this information does not include flights for which an invoice is not yet recorded in the Ministry's FMIS.

**5. How much has the Ministry for the Environment spent on other forms of transport for Mr Palmer so far?**

As of 1 May 2023, the Ministry's FMIS shows the Ministry has spent \$299.22 on taxis for Mr Palmer. Please note, this information does not include transport costs for which an invoice is not yet recorded in the Ministry's FMIS.

In accordance with the Ministry's internal work travel policies, these taxi trips were for work outside of Mr Palmer's personal travel to and from Hawke's Bay.

Although Mr Palmer is a regular user of the airport express bus service in Wellington, this is at his personal expense. For this reason, as of 1 May 2023, no other forms of transport have been paid for by the Ministry for Mr Palmer.

As you may be aware, Secretary for the Environment, and Chief Executive, Ministry for the Environment gifts, benefits and expenses are published annually, in line with PSC guidance. More information about these disclosures is available on PSC's website at:

<https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/guidance/guide-he-aratohu/model-standards/chief-executive-gifts-benefits-and-expenses/>

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Office of the Ombudsman of my decision relating to this request, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. The relevant details can be found on their website at: [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz).

Please note that due to the public interest in our work the Ministry for the Environment publishes responses to requests for official information on our [OIA responses page](#) shortly after the response has been sent. If you have any queries about this, please feel free to contact our Ministerial Services team: [ministerials@mfe.govt.nz](mailto:ministerials@mfe.govt.nz).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Pepi Batsos', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Pepi Batsos  
Director – Office of the Chief Executive