



S9(2)(a)

OIAD-609

Dear S9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 18 April 2023 to the Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry) requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

1. *Does the new Chief Executive of the Ministry of Environment, James Palmer, use hybrid working?*
 - a. *If so, please breakdown any costs incurred when Mr Palmer travels to the Wellington office. Specify where he travels from and identify the cost to the Ministry. Include the cost of any tickets or fuel.*
2. *Have James Palmer's family or friends ever accompanied him on flights which are related to his work with the Ministry?*
 - a. *If so, how much have these flights cost?*
3. *Do any Deputy Secretaries to the Ministry of Environment use hybrid working?*
 - a. *If so, please breakdown any costs incurred when they travel to the Wellington office. Specify where they travel from and identify the cost to the Ministry.*

Clarification of your request

The Ministry contacted you on 26 April 2023 to clarify parts of your request. In response to the Ministry's request for clarification, you confirmed:

- by "hybrid working" you mean utilising a workplace policy that allows someone to work remotely some of the time, and in the office the rest of the time.
- regarding point 1a, you are interested in just the cost of fuel or tickets which the Ministry has paid for. It would also be useful to you to know if the Ministry has covered the ticket cost for anyone accompanying Mr Palmer on these trips.
- regarding point 3, you are interested in the same cost breakdown as in points 1 and 2. You would also like to know if Deputy Secretaries are reimbursed for their travel to work in the office (on days when not working from home). This would be fuel or tickets.
- for all points, you would like the Ministry to indicate from which area the Chief Executive or Deputy Secretaries are travelling from to Wellington (i.e. airport in the case of plane tickets or region/city/town etc).

Response to your request

I have provided responses to each part of your request below.

1. Does the new Chief Executive of the Ministry of Environment, James Palmer, use hybrid working?

Yes, Mr Palmer does use the Ministry's flexible-by-default approach to work from Hawke's Bay where practical and appropriate for part of the working week.

The Ministry has a flexible-by-default approach for all staff. Common types of flexible working within the Ministry include:

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

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.

a. If so, please breakdown any costs incurred when Mr Palmer travels to the Wellington office. Specify where he travels from and identify the cost to the Ministry. Include the cost of any tickets or fuel.

As of 1 May 2023, the Ministry has not paid for Mr Palmer's personal travel from Hawke's Bay to the Ministry's Wellington office.

In accordance with the Ministry's internal work travel policies, all 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 travel from Hawke's Bay to Wellington.

Gifts, benefits and expenses related to the Secretary for the Environment, and Chief Executive for the Ministry 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/>

2. Have James Palmer's family or friends ever accompanied him on flights which are related to his work with the Ministry?

a. If so, how much have these flights cost?

Mr Palmer took one flight for work purposes which a family member was also on. The family member's travel was not paid for by the Ministry. As of 1 May 2023, the Ministry has not

paid for Mr Palmer's family or friends to accompany him on any flights which are related to his work with the Ministry.

- 3. Do any Deputy Secretaries to the Ministry of Environment use hybrid working?**
a. If so, please breakdown any costs incurred when they travel to the Wellington office. Specify where they travel from and identify the cost to the Ministry.

Yes, Deputy Secretaries at the Ministry use the Ministry's flexible-by-default approach to work remotely from home where practical and appropriate.

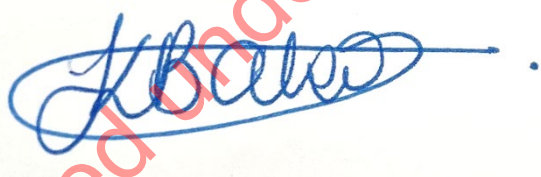
As outlined in point 1, the Ministry has a flexible-by-default approach for staff in all roles of our organisation.

As of 1 May 2023, the Ministry does not pay travel costs for Deputy Secretaries' travel to Wellington where they are using hybrid working and their travel is from outside Wellington.

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.

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.

Yours sincerely



Pepi Batsos
Director – Office of the Chief Executive