

13 APR 2017

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email dated 16 March 2017, to the Ministry of Education requesting the following information:

*When your staff are seconded to work at locations outside of their home base:*

1. *Where do they stay eg hotel, motel?*
2. *What price per night is paid for on average?*
3. *What else is paid for e.g. travel, food, and allowances?*
4. *Does your Department shop around for the best rate and why/why not?*
5. *If staff are seconded for a long period of time, how long does your Department fund their accommodation etc before they must make their own arrangements?*
6. *How many of your staff were seconded over the last year?*
7. *What was the total spend on accommodation for staff on secondment last year?*
8. *How does that compare to previous years?*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

Initially, I would like to advise you that in the past year, no staff were seconded out of their home region. Where a secondment opportunity is realised, we endeavour to fill the vacancy from within the region itself.

My response to your questions is set out below.

1. *Where do they stay eg hotel, motel?*
2. *What price per night is paid for on average?*
3. *What else is paid for e.g. travel, food, and allowances?*

The Ministry has a preferred accommodation and travel supplier arrangement in place, and these would generally be used for any short-term secondments. The price varies dependent on location, time of year etc. Ministry policy is that travel and accommodation expenditure should be economical and efficient, having regard to purpose, distance, time, urgency and personal health, security and safety.

Expenses are reimbursed based on actual and reasonable costs. Expenses that will be reimbursed are agreed at the commencement of the secondment and confirmed between the staff member and relevant managers to ensure it is a fair representation and meets Ministry travel, accommodation, and sensitive expenditure policies.

4. *Does your Department shop around for the best rate and why/why not?*

The Ministry has a contracted supplier for accommodation and travel and any arrangements would generally be made through this provider. Part of the process of selecting specific providers is ensuring they represent value for money. Where a contracted supplier accommodation is not available, staff may use an alternative provider but this must consider staff health, safety and security and be cost effective. It will be agreed between the staff member and respective managers before commencement.

5. *If staff are seconded for a long period of time, how long does your Department fund their etc before they must make their own arrangements?*

As outlined above, most secondments occur within the secondees existing home location. Where this is not the case, policy details that a long-term secondment that incur travel and accommodation costs as part of a commuting arrangement are only undertaken if the work is considered high priority and essential to the achievement of the Ministry's priorities. The end date of secondments are agreed in advance, and to ensure that such arrangements are treated consistently and prudently. Ministry policy is for any proposals for commuting travel arrangements at Ministry expense be approved in advance by the appropriate Deputy Secretary and our Chief People Officer. Any arrangements are subject to a full review after 12 weeks.

6. *How many of your staff were seconded over the last year?*

In the financial year 2015/16 there were 75 secondments involving permanent staff. As we are part of the State Services talent programme the Ministry has a number of secondments within our offices nationwide and, as a large employer, we often provide talent to other agencies to support successful outcomes, in addition to taking opportunities within other agencies to further develop our people. We are very active in the Social and Justice Career Board, the Auckland Career Board and Education Career Board and all of these Boards are currently in the business of moving our talent around for better Public Service outcomes.

7. *What was the total spend on accommodation for staff on secondment last year?*  
8. *How does that compare to previous years?*

We cannot readily extract the total spend on accommodation for staff on secondment from our electronic records. In order to identify this type of specific information, we would be required to manually review a large number of files. In accordance with the Act, we have considered whether affixing a charge, inviting you to refine your request or extending the timeframe would enable your request to be answered. However, given the scale of the request we do not consider that this would appropriate. For this reason, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, as the information cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

I trust the information provided is of assistance. Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise these with the Ministry. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to ask an Ombudsman to review this response. You can do this by writing to [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Yours sincerely



Zoe Griffiths  
**Deputy Secretary**  
**Business Enablement and Support**