

OIAD-3642

26 January 2024

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Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation, received on 07 December 2023, in which you asked for information associated with end of year Christmas functions, associated expenditure and office closure dates:

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982.

On 15 December 2023, you clarified two aspects of your request. These clarifications are outlined below:

1. You clarified that your question which asked for *'Total expenditure on presents for staff including but not limited to 'secret Santa' etc'* only concerned expenditure on staff gifts throughout the Christmas period.
2. Your question which noted *'Please specify how many managers and senior executive staff are taking more hours/days out of office than is blanket across the Department/Ministry for the Christmas period'* was asked to be disregarded after clarification was sought.

Context:

The Department of Conservation (The Department) Sensitive Expenditure policy applies to all staff functions and a specific policy exists in relation to Christmas Functions.

These policies are outlined below for your reference:

Staff Functions - General Principles

- Alcohol will generally not be provided by the Department, unless where considered appropriate in certain situations. Prior written approval from DDG or delegated Director must be obtained. Any supply of alcohol is to be modest e.g. 2 standard drinks per person.
- Approval for hospitality expenditure is to be obtained prior to event from Director or higher.
- Existing DOC facilities or other free venues to be used wherever possible.

Christmas Functions

- Christmas functions are limited to **one per office**. DOC will cover up to \$20 per head for employees attending. This is for food and non-alcoholic beverages only, no gifts. Eg. Conservation House will have one all staff Christmas function, with DOC contributing up to \$20 per head for staff attending.
- Business groups or teams may choose to also have their own team function, but this is at their own cost.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *End-of-Year Bonuses:*

- * Total amount paid in end-of-year bonuses to the CEO this Christmas.
- * Total amount paid in bonuses to staff employed by your organization this Christmas.
- * Please also provide the same for Christmas 2022.

- The Public Service Commissioner (the Commissioner) is the employer of Public Service chief executives and determines their remuneration. In 2018, the Commissioner took a new approach to managing the performance of chief executives, which included changing the structure of their remuneration. These changes mean performance pay entitlements are no longer included in chief executive employment agreements from 1 July 2018.

The Department of Conservation did not pay Christmas bonuses to staff in 2022 or 2023.

2. *Presents for Staff:*

- * Total expenditure on presents for staff including but not limited to 'secret Santa' etc.
- * Please include this cost for last year also.

- As noted above, clarification sought on this aspect of your request confirmed that it relates only to Christmas gifts.

DOC does not provide staff with Christmas gifts. Teams may have held their own secret Santa present exchanges at their own cost, not funded by DOC.

Financial data associated with 2023 Christmas spend on Christmas parties is not yet available. We are still processing transactions from over the Christmas period and as such accurate, finalised data cannot be provided at this time. The requested information cannot be gathered, collated and provided until the relevant datasets exist. We can however provide you with requested information at a later date when relevant datasets exist.

3. *Christmas Trees and lights:*

** Number of Christmas trees purchased and erected, and the cost of these purchases for this year.*

** Please also include the cost for any Christmas lights for tree and any lights for buildings for this year.*

** Please also include the cost of both for last year, too.*

** Please highlight if the council had any left over from last year.*

- We did not purchase any Christmas trees in the 2023 year. We also did not incur any costs for Christmas lights or decorations in 2023. Any Christmas trees and lights erected in offices were from prior years.

We can also confirm that there was nil expenditure on either Christmas trees or Christmas tree lights in the prior year (2022).

4. *Christmas Party Supplies:*

** Please breakdown the amount spent on the following for the years 2022 and 2023:*

** Wrapping paper*

** Santa hats*

** Alcohol for parties*

** Party hats*

** Christmas crackers*

** Christmas cards*

** Christmas decorations*

- We can confirm that the Department had nil expenditure on Christmas party supplies noted below in the 2022 calendar year:

- *Wrapping paper*

- *Santa hats*

- *Alcohol for parties*

- *Party hats*

- *Christmas crackers*

- *Christmas cards*

- *Christmas decorations*

- Financial data associated with 2023 Christmas spend on Christmas parties is not yet available. We are still processing transactions from over the Christmas period and as such accurate, finalised data cannot be provided at this time. The requested information cannot be gathered, collated and provided until the relevant datasets exist. We can however provide you with requested information at a later date when relevant datasets exist.

5. *Christmas Parties:*

** Total expenditure breakdown on Christmas parties. Please also include in the breakdown any travel arrangement costs.*

** Please include this for last year, also.*

- Financial data associated with 2023 Christmas spend on Christmas parties is not yet available. We are still processing transactions from over the Christmas period and as such accurate, finalised data cannot be provided at this time. The requested information cannot be gathered, collated and provided until the relevant datasets exist. We can however provide you with requested information at a later date when relevant datasets exist.

Recorded spend on Christmas parties during December 2022 was \$28,928. This is in line with the Department's policy on Christmas spend, which provides a maximum of \$20 per head for staff attending. Any staff Christmas parties are held in each office for local staff, therefore no travel costs have been incurred.

6. *Office Closure:*

** Duration of office closure during the Christmas period.*

** Please specify how many managers and senior executive staff are taking more hours/days out of office than is blanket across the Department/Ministry for the Christmas period.*

** Does the Christmas office closure also affect contractors paid by the Department/Ministry? If not, how much are they being paid over the Christmas break in an hourly rate and how much is it expected to cost the Department/Ministry?*

- Except for seven-day operations, all DOC offices closed on Monday 25 December and re-opened on Wednesday 3 January. Staff not required to provide essential services during the office closure were expected to take annual or other leave on the non-public holidays of 27, 28 and 29 December. Examples of essential services include staff working in Campgrounds, Great Walk huts, staff with bird feeding facilities and staff working in essential emergency response roles (e.g. fire response) etc.

The same office close down requirements applied to all managers and senior executive staff. If managers and senior executive staff wish to take more time than the statutory public holidays, they are required to apply for annual leave in the same way as all other staff.

The Christmas office closure also affects contractors paid by the Department. Contractors were required to take unpaid Christmas leave from December 20th to January 15th unless an exception had been agreed by the relevant Deputy Director-General for any business critical function.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) may be published on the Department's website.

Nāku noa, nā



Kevin Martin
Chief Financial Officer
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai