

31 January 2024

C176346



Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your email of 7 December 2023 to the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa, requesting information about Corrections' Christmas expenditure. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

You requested:

***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.*

Corrections does not grant end of year bonuses. I am also advised that 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.

As such, the information that you have requested is refused under section 18(g) of the OIA, as the information requested is not held by Corrections, and we have no grounds for believing that it is held by another agency.

Lump sum performance payments may be made, subject to performance, to a small group of employees under the provisions of their collective agreement. Information on lump sum performance payments is published regularly through the Justice Select Committees Annual Review and Estimates examination of the Department of Corrections. For the latest publicly available information please see question 132 on page 158 of the [2023/24 Estimates Examination of the Department of Corrections](#).

***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.*

Although there is a provision for gift giving up to \$100 for certain acknowledgements, Corrections does not gift Christmas presents to staff. Any presents or secret Santa gifts are arranged by individual staff members/teams, and are not funded by Corrections. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the information requested does not exist.

***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.*

***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*

I am advised that the large majority of decorations, including Christmas trees, are used on a year-on-year basis and have been supplied by individual staff either through purchasing these personally or by donating them over the years. I am further advised that if Corrections has contributed financially to any of the above in the past two years, we would be required to consult extensively across the organisation as we cannot readily extract this information from our electronic records nor is it held in any readily retrievable format.

In accordance with the OIA, we have considered whether to affix a charge or extend the time limit for responding. However, given the scale of the request we do not consider that this would be an appropriate use of our publicly funded resources. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

As per Section 18B we have considered whether consulting with you would enable the request to be made in a form that would remove the reason for the refusal. However, we do not consider that the request can be refined in this instance.

It is noted that as per Corrections Policy, we do not provide alcoholic beverages for any functions.

**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.*

Corrections contributes up to \$25 (including GST) per staff member for food and non-alcoholic drinks for one end-of-year or beginning of year celebrations per year. The contribution cannot be used to buy gifts. Prior approval for the function expenditure must be given by a Regional Commissioner or any member of the Executive Leadership Team.

Travel arrangements for these functions are not recorded on Corrections' travel expense system as our system does not capture travel expenses that fall specifically under a 'Christmas party' category. As such, we cannot readily extract Corrections' total Christmas function and travel expenditures from our electronic records and is not held in any readily retrievable format. To identify this type of specific information, we would be required to consult extensively across the organisation.

However, Corrections' Travel Policy Guidelines specifically notes that all travel must be "necessary and important to work objectives". Therefore, it is expected that travel expenses are not used solely for the purpose of Christmas parties, unless the travel coincides with another work-related meeting(s) or activity that requires such travel.

In accordance with the OIA, we have considered whether to affix a charge or extend the time limit for responding. However, given the scale of the request we do not consider that this would be an appropriate use of our publicly funded resources. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

**Office Closure:**

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

The reception at Corrections' National Office was closed from 22 December 2023 and reopened on 8 January 2024. However, various teams continued to operate during the Christmas period and worked from National Office between those dates. Further to this, Community Corrections sites and prisons across the country are operational throughout the Christmas break.

- *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.*

Unfortunately, we cannot readily extract all manager and Senior Executive's annual leave bookings from our electronic records, nor is it held in any readily retrievable format. To identify this type of specific information, we would be required to consult extensively across the organisation.

In accordance with the OIA, we have considered whether to affix a charge or extend the time limit for responding. However, we do not consider that this would be an appropriate use of our publicly funded resources. We have also considered whether consulting with you would assist to make the request in a form that would remove the reason for the refusal. However, we do not consider that the request could be refined in this instance.

Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

- *Does the Christmas office closure also affect contactors 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?*

Self-employed people, or people contracted to work for Corrections, are engaged by a principle to perform services under a contract for services. Contractors are self-employed and earn income by invoicing for their services. Therefore, contractors are only paid for the hours that they work and, as they are not directly employed by Corrections, are not entitled to holiday pay or annual leave paid by Corrections.

Please note that this response may be published on Corrections' website. Typically, responses are published quarterly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

I trust the information provided is of assistance. I encourage you to raise any concerns about this response with Corrections. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Ngā mihi



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People and Capability