



5 September 2023

Tēnā koe

On 5 August 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

I understand the government vaccination mandates were dropped sometime around Sept 2022 with the revoking of certain C19 orders by the State.

What number of staff did you terminate or place on any form of "extended leave" due to your vaccination mandates around Nov/Dec 2021 and Jan 2022? Please also share the total headcount as of 15 Nov 2021 and today (when you answer this OIA).

On 31 August 2023 the Ministry notified you that while we had decided to grant your request in part, further time was required to finalise the information to be released to you.

The Ministry undertook a health and safety risk assessment in November/December 2021 with consultation with all staff from 29 November to 8 December 2021.

The Ministry's vaccination policy was announced 16 December 2021 and from that date employees were asked to confirm their vaccination status with their managers. Confirmation of vaccination was for managers to sight employees' My Vaccination Pass or My Covid Record on or before 7 January 2022. To comply with the policy employees needed to have received their first dose of the vaccine no later than 10 January 2022 and the second dose no later than 4 February 2022.

In June 2022, following a series of risk assessment workshops that included PSA representatives, and over 200 Health and Safety Representatives, the Ministry reviewed the policy based on changes in the COVID-19 situation nationally. In September 2022, the Ministry adopted an "encourage but not require" policy for COVID-19 vaccination.

A second review of the policy was conducted in June 2023 and updated to align with the government's removal of vaccination mandates. These changes have not affected the purpose, scope, or application of the policy as reviewed in 2022.

For the sake of clarity, the Ministry will respond to your each of your questions separately.

What number of staff did you terminate or place on any form of "extended leave" due to your vaccination mandates around Nov/Dec 2021 and Jan 2022?

For the period 1 November 2021 to 31 January 2022 there were no staff terminated due to the vaccination mandate.

In relation to your request for staff who were placed on any form of 'extended leave' due to the vaccination mandate policy, I am unable to provide you with this information as the Ministry did not record the information in the form you have requested it.

In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review a substantial number of files. As such, I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

Please also share the total headcount as of 15 Nov 2021 and today.

The Ministry's headcount for permanent and fixed term staff as at 15 November 2021 was 9,357 and as at 5 August 2023 it was 9,239.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry's website. Your personal details will be

deleted, and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding the vaccination mandate, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Melissa Gill', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Melissa Gill

**Deputy Chief Executive
Organisational Assurance and Communication**