



Ben Ben  
fyi-request-23286-f9f244c3@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: PMO 2023-297

Tēnā koe Ben Ben

## Official Information Act request relating to costs to have a second Air Force plane wait in Manila on stand by

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request, received on 28 June 2023. You requested:

*"I hope this message finds you well. I recently came across information regarding your recent visit to China, where a second air force plane was required to wait in Manila on standby in case the one you were traveling in experienced any issues. I am currently awaiting confirmation from the Ministry of Defence regarding the exact costs associated with this trip. However, based on an online tool I used to calculate fuel, airport fees, storage, and other expenses, it has come to my attention that it may have been more economically responsible to lease a private charter instead of deploying two jets to Asia.*

*This situation prompted me to reflect upon the government's Ute tax policy, which is focused on climate change and emission reduction. As a tradesman who relies on a vehicle capable of carrying heavy workloads, it is disheartening to see how we are impacted by these policies while witnessing the government contributing double the required emissions for this trip through the use of two jets. I won't delve into the embarrassment of needing two jets in case of a breakdown, but I am curious to know the decision-making process behind such choices, the financial implications for taxpayers during a time of recession, and why there seems to be a double standard regarding carbon emissions. It is disappointing that alternative, more cost-effective solutions with significantly reduced carbon footprints are not considered by the government.*

*In light of this, I have a few additional questions regarding the trip:*

- 1. What was the rationale behind the decision to send two jets instead of exploring more cost-effective alternatives, considering the economic impact and potential savings for taxpayers?*
- 2. Could you provide a breakdown of the specific costs associated with deploying two jets, including fuel, maintenance, staffing, and any other relevant expenses?*
- 3. Were there any contingency plans in place in case both jets experienced technical difficulties simultaneously, and if so, what were they?*
- 4. How does this particular trip align with the government's overall strategy for reducing carbon emissions and addressing climate change? Are there specific considerations or exceptions for official government travel?*
- 5. Is there an established framework or set of guidelines that governs the decision-making process for official government travel, particularly when it comes to assessing cost-effectiveness and carbon footprint reduction?*

The Office of the Prime Minister partially transferred your request to the New Zealand Defence Force in relation to parts 1, 2, and 3 of your request. Regarding the remainder of your request which relates to air travel and the Government's climate change commitments, I have set the relevant information for Ministerial air travel below.

Members of the Executive may be required to travel within New Zealand or internationally in relation to their work. Information about what is permitted in relation to Ministerial travel (<https://www.dPMC.govt.nz/our-business-units/cabinet-office/supporting-work-cabinet/cabinet-manual/2-ministers-crown-11>) can be found in the Cabinet Manual which is publicly available on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) website: <https://www.dPMC.govt.nz/our-business-units/cabinet-office/supporting-work-cabinet/cabinet-manual>.

On 3 September 2007, Cabinet directed the Ministry for the Environment to work with Ministerial Services (a business unit within the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA)) to procure offsets for Ministerial air travel from 2007/08 onwards, on an annual basis.

Since 2007, Ministerial Services has been procuring carbon offsets, via carbon credits, for Ministerial air travel. As part of the administration process of Ministerial air travel expenses, information is sent to Toitū Envirocare<sup>1</sup> on a quarterly basis to calculate carbon credit offsets. I can confirm as follows:

- Carbon offsets are calculated for all Ministerial flights with Air New Zealand and its Star Alliance Partners, which accounted for an average of 98 percent of total Ministerial air travel over the last five years; and
- The remaining two percent of Ministerial air travel relates to when Members of the Executive are required to travel on non-scheduled charter flights (or potentially helicopter flights) for a specific purpose. DIA does not collect information on such travel to enable us to offset carbon emissions for these flights currently. This is generally because the information is not available at the time of booking and reflects the size and nature of the businesses concerned.

We are committed to working with individual operators whenever possible to minimise the carbon impact of all Ministerial air travel.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

Ngā mihi nui,

Andrew Kirton   
**Chief of Staff**

---

<sup>1</sup> Toitū Envirocare is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research, a government-owned Crown Research Institute that works with government and industry bodies to maximise the availability and advantages of credible independent environmental certification to reduce their carbon footprint. Go to [About Us | Toitū Envirocare \(toitu.co.nz\)](http://About Us | Toitū Envirocare (toitu.co.nz)) for more information on Toitū Envirocare.