



13 February 2020

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Dear Jeremy,

Your Official Information Act request OIA 1920-0523

I write regarding your Official Information Act (Act) request, which was received by the Department of Internal Affairs (Department) on 2 January 2020.

You have requested (the original request is provided in Appendix 1):

Please provide further explanation as to the activities, and as to the composition and reason for the costs in the following:

- The Counsel Assisting's trip to Afghanistan that cost over \$25k.
- The DCE trip to Singapore to speak at the DGX which shows as costing over \$25k, but the text states that this is the cost of cancelling the airfares.
- The trip of the DCE, chief privacy officer, principal advisor and a director to Israel for the D7 that cost over \$55k for four people.
- A director and policy analyst going to France for a finance task force plenary at over \$21k.
- An external consultant going to France for a workshop at over \$8k. As well as my above questions please explain why you paid this for an external party and didn't send one of your own people instead.
- An external consultant travelling to the UK for a child abuse inquiry. The text specifically states that the whopping \$21k bill is a reimbursement of airfares. Surely that whole amount can't be airfares.
- Four people to the UK at over \$55k with an explanation of "We gained useful insight and information that will assist us in the context of our inquiry". The other text just says there were exploratory meetings with experts. Nothing actually tells us what this trip was about.
- Four people going to Germany for over \$69k with the only explanation being "participation in proof of concept for production machine-readable travel documents". This very limited explanation does not tell us anything that gives an inkling as to why it cost so much.

Departmental travel:

The DCE trip to Singapore to speak at the DGX which shows as costing over \$25k, but the text states that this is the cost of cancelling the airfares?

The Deputy Chief Executive (DCE) trip to Singapore was at the invitation of the Singaporean Government to attend the Digital Government Exchange (DGX) conference. It was two-day event, where international public sector leaders discussed issues facing smart cities and opportunities for growth through technology.

The original flight costs of \$21,326 incurred 2018/19 were reimbursed by the Singaporean Government in the following financial year (2019/20). The cost to the Department was \$660 to cover the cost of changing the flights.

In the table below is the breakdown of costs for attending this event:

Cost of airfares	Cost of accommodation	Other ¹	Total
\$21,986*	\$3,327	\$54	\$25,367

*The cost to the Department was \$660 to cover the cost of changing the flights.

The trip of the DCE, chief privacy officer, principal advisor and a director to Israel for the D7 that cost over \$55k for four people.

The Minister of Government Digital Services was unable to attend the event to sign the Digital 7 Charter in Israel. The DCE with three other Departmental staff attended the event as Head of the New Zealand delegation representing New Zealand as a leading digital nation.

Digital 7 Charter was created in early 2018, when New Zealand along with six other countries developed a charter on harnessing digital technology and new ways of working to improve citizens' lives. This charter expanded to nine countries when Mexico and Portugal joined later in the year. It is now officially called Digital 9 Charter.

The New Zealand delegation presented and held workshops at the 2018 Digital Israel Conference on Digital Rights and Co-Lead for the Digital Identity Thematic Groups.

In the table below is the breakdown of costs for attending this event:

Cost of airfares	Cost of accommodation	Other ¹	Total
\$46,498	\$6,767	\$2,022	\$55,287

A director and policy analyst going to France for a finance task force plenary at over \$21k.

The attendance by a Policy Analyst and the Director of the Anti-Money Laundering Group was to represent the Department as part of the New Zealand delegation at the Financial

¹ Other expenditure includes rental cars, taxi charges, meals and other incidental travel expenses.

Action Task Force (FATF) Plenary, which is the FATF's decision making body. New Zealand is an active member of the FATF.

Attendance at the FATF Plenary is necessary for ensuring that New Zealand can participate in discussions about international policies to combat money laundering and terrorism financing and that policy decisions can then be applied in New Zealand. In October 2018 this included discussions on the regulation of virtual assets which is being applied in New Zealand.

Participation in the consideration of other countries' mutual evaluations at the FATF Plenary has also supported New Zealand's preparation for the 2020 FATF Mutual Evaluation (ME) of New Zealand's Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) system.

In the table below is the breakdown of costs for attending this event:

Cost of airfares	Cost of accommodation	Other ¹	Total
\$14,684	\$5,965	\$1,000	\$21,649

An external consultant going to France for a workshop at over \$8k. As well as my above questions please explain why you paid this for an external party and didn't send one of your own people instead.

A member of the FATF Secretariat was invited to New Zealand to co-facilitate pre-ME training workshops. The workshops were for representatives from different agencies across the New Zealand AML/CFT system.

The knowledge and insights gained from the workshops have assisted in effective preparation for the ME which is taking place in February/March 2020.

In the table below is the breakdown of costs for attending this event:

Cost of airfares	Cost of accommodation	Other ¹	Total
\$8,752	\$ nil	\$ nil	\$8,752

Four people going to Germany for over \$69k with the only explanation being "participation in proof of concept for production machine-readable travel documents". This very limited explanation does not tell us anything that gives an inkling as to why it cost so much.

Departmental staff travelled to Germany to confirm the preferred supplier for travel documents and the personalisation solution. This included extensive live testing to confirm the passbook and machine compatibility does meet the department's travel document requirements.

In the table below is the breakdown of costs for attending this event:

Cost of airfares	Cost of accommodation	Other ¹	Total
\$53,577	\$11,786	\$4,277	\$69,640

Inquiries travel:

Please note while the Department administers and reports on expenditure within inquiries, it does not make decisions with regard to expenditure. The Department recognises the need for the Inquires to maintain public confidence by acting in a way that is, and is seen to be, independent of the Government.

The Counsel Assisting's trip to Afghanistan that cost over \$25k.

The Counsel Assisting trip was for the Counsel Assisting the Inquiry into Operation Burnham to travel to an overseas site to interview a witness. The site travelled to is withheld under section 9(2)(ba) of the Official Information Act 1982 – to protect information that is subject to an obligation of confidence.

In the table below is the breakdown of costs for this trip:

Cost of airfares	Cost of accommodation	Other ¹	Total
\$20,243	\$4,077	\$1,164	\$25,483

An external consultant travelling to the UK for a child abuse inquiry. The text specifically states that the whopping \$21k bill is a reimbursement of airfares. Surely that whole amount can't be airfares?

The purpose of the visit was for Lady Smith, Chair of the Scottish government's child abuse inquiry to share insights into an Inquiry like New Zealand's Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the care of faith-based Institutions (RCHA).

The visit was organised by the independent RCHA supported by the Department. The visit covered issues of Government support and expectations, independence, challenges, the role of the Chair, accountabilities, work programme, overall management and trauma informed approaches. Lady Smith also presented to State Sector leaders while she was in New Zealand.

The reimbursed costs covered airfares and accommodation for Lady Smith's week-long visit.

In the table below is the breakdown of costs for attending this event:

Cost of airfares	Cost of accommodation	Other ¹	Total
\$21,095	Accommodation paid by Host*	\$ nil	\$21,095

*Accommodation cost of \$2,206 was reimbursed by the host in 2019/20 financial year.

Four people to the UK at over \$55k with an explanation of "We gained useful insight and information that will assist us in the context of our inquiry". The other text just says there were exploratory meetings with experts. Nothing actually tells us what this trip was about.

The visit to the UK and Israel for four people at \$55k was organised by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Attack on Christchurch Mosques. Further information has

been withheld under Official Information Act 1982 section 9(2)(ba) – to protect information that is subject to an obligation of confidence.

In the table below is the breakdown of costs for attending this event:

Cost of airfares	Cost of accommodation	Other ¹	Total
\$28,994	\$24,316	\$1,875	\$55,185

We consider that the withholding of information as mentioned above is not outweighed by other considerations which render it desirable, in the public interest, to make that information available.

If you have any feedback or questions about the Department's response, please let us know at OIA@DIA.govt.nz.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or Freephone 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Sharyn Mitchell
Chief Financial Officer

Appendix 1 - the original request

Please provide further explanation as to the activities, and as to the composition and reason for the costs in the following:

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