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22 February 2024

Erika Whittome

By email: fyi-request-25517-68eeb2c0@requests.fyi.org.nz
Ref: H2024035250

Tēnā koe Erika

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health – Manatū Hauora (the Ministry) on 23 January 2024 for information. You requested:

“Has the MoH compensated any employees or paid any benefits for "long term Covid" or for any "Covid-19 illnesses" or for paid any long-term benefits to your workers for covid-19 under this Accredited Employers program from ACC? If so, how many staff please for each category?”

No payments have been made under the Accredited Employers program from ACC for Ministry employees.

In March 2020, the Ministry provided employees with COVID-19 discretionary paid leave. Employees were able to use this leave if they became ill from COVID-19, had to care for dependants who had COVID-19 or if they were unable to work remotely for any other reason such as no internet access, or the nature of their roles meant their work could not be performed remotely.

On 17 January 2022, the Ministry implemented the COVID-19 Prevention and Control (Vaccination) policy which included continuing to provide COVID-19 discretionary paid leave to Ministry employees. The leave was updated to reflect the opportunity to allow employees to attend vaccination appointments, or to recover from any side effects of the vaccination.

A total of 615 Ministry employees took COVID-19 discretionary leave from March 2020 to 23 January 2023.

On 24 January 2023, the COVID-19 Prevention and Control (Vaccination) policy was updated, and COVID-19 discretionary paid leave was retired and reverted to regular sick leave provisions. Where an employee has insufficient sick leave to cover a period of absence, including potential Long COVID, the Ministry will give genuine consideration to the provision of additional discretionary paid days of leave, along with a range of options to support their return to work.

I trust this information fulfils your request. If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request with us, including this decision, please feel free to contact the OIA Services Team on:

oiagr@health.govt.nz.

Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Manatū Hauora website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Celia Wellington'.

Celia Wellington
Deputy Director-General
Corporate Services | Te Pou Tiaki