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4 May 2026

Ref: OIAD-6228

Tēnā koe Erika

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 05 April 2026, in which you asked the following questions in relation to Covid vaccine mandates:

- 1. What number of staff did your office terminate or place on any form of " extended leave" due to vaccination mandates in 2021/2022?*
- 2. When did you initiate and then remove your policy for only employing vaccinated staff?*
- 3. Would you please kindly share the emails and correspondence regarding this decision to initiate and then remove this policy for only hiring vaccinated staff?*
- 4. Please share a copy of the policy in its draft and final form*
- 5. Please share the workplace risk assessment for the Covid-19 disease*

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982.

At the time DOC's COVID-19 vaccination policy was developed and implemented, COVID-19 was assessed as a critical health and safety risk for the Department. As a result, the development, oversight and implementation of the policy were managed through DOC's Health and Safety function, in line with our obligations to identify and manage workplace health and safety risks.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

- 1. What number of staff did your office terminate or place on any form of " extended leave" due to vaccination mandates in 2021/2022?*

The Department placed 16 individuals on extended discretionary leave without pay from 26 March 2022. The employment of three fixed-term staff ended as their contracts were due to expire shortly and no suitable alternative work was available. All discretionary leave without pay arrangements ceased when DOC's Vaccination Policy was suspended from 4 May 2022. Please note that there were no terminations of permanent employees, due to stipulations of the vaccination policy (refer item 1d).

- 2. When did you initiate and then remove your policy for only employing vaccinated staff?*

The Department implemented the practices set out in the DOC COVID-19 Vaccination Policy for all permanent staff from 1 February 2022 (refer item 1 attached). The policy applied to contractors, suppliers, volunteers, and members of the public accessing DOC premises from 10 January 2022. The policy was suspended from 4 May 2022 (refer item 2 attached) in response to high vaccination rates, peaking Omicron transmission, and an updated risk assessment, which concluded that a blanket national vaccination mandate was no longer necessary to keep

staff safe, provided other health and safety controls were effectively implemented (refer item 2a).

3. *Would you please kindly share the emails and correspondence regarding this decision to initiate and then remove this policy for only hiring vaccinated staff?*

There was one piece of correspondence sent to all Department staff by the then Deputy Director-General, People on 13 April 2022. This information is attached as item 2, as referenced in the Appendix at the end of this letter.

4. *Please share a copy of the policy in its draft and final form*

DOC's COVID-19 Staff Vaccination Policy (refer item 1d) was developed through a structured consultation process. A draft policy (item 3) was circulated to staff for feedback, which was then collected and reviewed. That feedback informed revisions to the draft, and relevant changes were incorporated before the final policy was approved.

5. *Please share the workplace risk assessment for the Covid-19 disease.*

The Department's risk assessment is attached as item 1c. This document was provided to all employees in December 2021. At the time, the Public Service Commission Te Kawa Mataaho advised that, where there was no specific legislative mandate, each public service agency must conduct a health and safety risk assessment to determine whether and to what level vaccination was required to work in the workplace. The health and safety risk assessment was part of what DOC needed to do to fulfil its obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the documents listed below, subject to information being withheld under one or more of the following sections of the Official Information Act, as applicable:

- personal contact details of officials, under section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people.

In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Official Information Act and determined there are no public interests that outweigh the grounds for withholding.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) and attached documents may be published on the Department's website.

Nāku noa, nā



Davinia Harvey
Director Health Safety and Security
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Appendix

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	16 December 2021	Email: <i>IMPORTANT COVID-19 ANNOUNCEMENT: DOC's COVID-19 Vaccination Policy consultation outcome</i>	Released in part
1a	14 December 2021	Attachment: SLT Paper – COVID Vax Mandate Staff	Released in full
1b	14 December 2021	Attachment: Staff Consultation - Analysis of submissions	Released in full
1c	15 December 2021	Attachment: DOC risk assessment – transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace	Released in full
1d	15 December 2021	Attachment: DOC COVID-19 Vaccination Policy	Released in full
1e	15 December 2021	Attachment: COVID-19 Vaccination Policy Implementation HR Process and Guidance for DOC Employees	Released in full
1f	16 December 2021	Attachment: SLT Paper – COVID Vax Mandate Staff – Implementation HR process - DRAFT	Released in full
2	13 April 2022	Email: <i>COVID-19: DOC Vaccination Policy to be suspended from Wednesday 4 May</i>	Released in part
2a	13 April 2022	Attachment: Recommendation Paper – COVID Vax Mandates Cabinet Decision Implementation Process	Released in full
3	29 November 2021	DOC COVID-19 Vaccination Policy - DRAFT	Released in full