

25 February 2025

Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation, received on 29 January 2025, in which you asked a range of questions about the Rakiura National Park Visitor Centre. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982.

Please be advised as per previous correspondence and advice from the Ombudsman, the Department is not required to respond to your requests that have already been thoroughly addressed. DOC has previously answered a wide range of your questions regarding the selling of outdoor or safety equipment in the Rakiura Visitor Centre, particularly why we sell equipment and what the decision-making process entails, and the use of water taxis. Those answers stand, and I do not intend to address questions on these matters again. With this context, your questions and our responses are listed below:

- 1. I would like a full list of all outdoor gear sold by DOC including explanations of why each item is classified as a safety item?*
- 2. I want to know when each new item that you sell has been introduced and why?*

Please see the attached list of stock items that can be retailed at the Rakiura National Park Visitor Centre (RNPVC), including new items:

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
Attachment 1	February 2025	RNPVC Outdoor Equipment	Released in full

Decision making regarding safety items has already been thoroughly addressed. I refer you to OIAD-3337 sent to you on 13 September 2023.

3. *I would also like the total revenue earned by DOC for the following years in relation to all outdoor gear?*

Revenue from sales of outdoor equipment at Rakiura National Park Visitor Centre (excluding GST):

- July 2021 to June 2023: \$28,032.96
- July 2022 to June 2023: \$34,300.80
- July 2023 to June 2024: \$38,257.70
- July 2024 to 1 Feb 2025 (year to date): \$19,875.72

4. *I would like to know why DOC is deemed to be opened 7 days a week in order to justify why DOC competes with me.*

The Department currently runs a 7-day a week operation as a way to manage health and safety obligations associated with our mandate in the Conservation Act to 'foster recreation'. Our operating hours are not determined by the opening hours of any other business.

When Rakiura National Park Visitor Centre is closed, Department staff are available to respond to visitor safety concerns via the 0800 DOC HOT phone service.

5. *I want to know all dates the Visitor Centre has been closed to the public and all operating times one the years shown below.*

To provide you with a list of all dates the Rakiura National Park Visitor Centre (the visitor centre) has been closed to the public and all operating times for the years listed in your request would require substantial research. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act 1992.

The visitor centre opening hours are:

- Summer: Open every day 8:30am – 4:30pm
- Shoulder season: Open Monday - Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm. Saturday and Sunday 9:30am – 3:00pm
- Winter: Open Monday to Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm. Saturday and Sunday 10:00am – 2:00pm

These operating hours vary seasonally to respond to the changes in visitor numbers throughout the year. Visitor centre opening hours may otherwise vary from time to time e.g. closure sometimes occurs for staff training, meetings and other operational considerations.

6. *Additionally for all the years below, I want to total cost expended by DOC on all water taxis in Stewart Island which obviously excludes Ruggedy Range?*

Please refer to OIAD-3338, sent to you on 13 September 2023, for the amount DOC Rakiura spent on water taxis from June 2021 to the September 2023.

The cost of water taxis for DOC Rakiura for the 2023/2024 financial year was \$25,876.52.

From July 2024 to February 2025 (year to date) the cost expenditure on water taxis was \$3617.40. This decrease in spend is related to an increase in skippers on the DOC team, and therefore a decrease in need to use water taxis.

7. *I want to know what assistance DOC are giving to other operators exclusively e.g. shutting the DOC office during peak tourism season to carry out sea lion training on Ulva Island with only RealNZ*


The Department does not exclusively provide sea lion training to specific operators. The DOC Rakiura team have informed me that more sea lion training opportunities will be available over time. The DOC office is not shut during these training sessions.

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.

If you wish to discuss this with the Department, please contact Rachael Moore by email ramoore@doc.govt.nz.

Nāku noa, nā



Aaron Fleming MNZM
Regional Operations Director, Southern South Island
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai