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Te Aro
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Ref: OIAD-5299

27 June 2025

Tēnā koe

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 30 May 2025, in which you asked for the following, held on record since 1 January 2023:

- 1. A copy of the agency's current work from home policy, including the date it was last updated and any accompanying documentation outlining the rationale for the most recent changes.*
- 2. Copies of any previous versions of the work from home policy within the specified timeframe, including the dates each version was in effect (to and from) and any documentation explaining the reasons for changes made.*
- 3. Copies of all documents (including but not limited to briefings, memos, internal advice, and reports) provided to or from the Chief Executive or Executive Leadership Team relating to proposed or actual changes to the work from home policy.*

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

Context

For context, our people are distributed nationally and across a range of working environments, both field-based and office-based. The Department does not have a specific work from home policy. However, it has a Flexible Work Policy, where people can request to work from home.

In 2019, we introduced our first Flexible Working Policy with clear instruction that any flexible work arrangements must meet the needs of the organisation, individual and team. Under this policy we committed to enabling staff to work flexibly, where possible.

In October 2024, we amended the level of approval authority for requests to work from home for three or more days per week (including requests for remote working) from direct line manager approval to Tier 2 level approval (Deputy Director-General Organisation Support).

Following the Public Service Commission's (PSC) Flexible Work (Working from Home) Guidance published in December 2024, we reviewed our Flexible Work Policy to ensure alignment with the PSC Guidance. In conjunction with this, we re-visited the level of approval authority for requests to work from home for three or more days per week (including requests for remote working) and changed this from Tier 2 level approval (Deputy Director-General Organisation Support) to Tier 3 level approval (Chief People Officer).

Our response

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *A copy of the agency's current work from home policy, including the date it was last updated and any accompanying documentation outlining the rationale for the most recent changes.*

We have attached a copy of our current Flexible Work Policy (Item 1 as described in the attached schedule of documents). This policy has been in place since 24 March 2025. It was recently updated to ensure alignment with the PSC's Flexible Working (Work from Home) Guidance.

When updating our Flexible Work Policy, we worked in partnership with the Public Service Association as part of the Department's high-performance engagement model. We also used the opportunity to:

- simplify our policy, guidance, and approval processes
- address any gaps in relation to working from home. For example, new information on psychological health and safety, information/physical security, defining remote work and how this differs from working from home (using definitions from PSC guidance), and
- embed our new organisational values and behaviours in how we manage flexible work requests.

Our current policy has two different approval levels for requests to work from home:

- Requests for two or less days per week can be approved by the direct line manager.
- Requests to work from home for three or more days per week, or remote work, require Chief People Officer approval.

2. *Copies of any previous versions of the work from home policy within the specified timeframe, including the dates each version was in effect (to and from) and any documentation explaining the reasons for changes made.*

We have attached our old Flexible Working Arrangements Policy (item 2, in the document schedule below). This was in effect from 27 September 2019 to 23 March 2025.

There was one update to this policy while it was in place. In October 2024, there were changes to who could approve work from home requests. From October 2024, while direct line managers could approve requests to work from home for two or less days per week, requests for three or more days per week required approval from the Deputy Director-General Organisation Support.

In February 2025, while updating our flexible work policy, we explored removing the Deputy Director-General Organisation Support approval level. We proposed to remove this step so that direct line managers could be the approving authority for all work from home and remote work requests.

The memo attached (item 3 in the document schedule below) captures this request. While the request was not approved, it was decided that the approval level could be dropped to Chief People Officer level. A record of this decision is provided (item 4).

3. *Copies of all documents (including but not limited to briefings, memos, internal advice, and ports) provided to or from the Chief Executive or Executive Leadership Team relating to proposed or actual changes to the work from home policy.*

We do not hold any documents that were provided to or from the Chief Executive or the Executive (Senior) Leadership Team as a whole, relating to changes to our Flexible Work Policy. Accordingly, this part of your request is refused under section 18(g) of the OIA, as the information is not held by the Department and we have no reason to believe it is held by another agency.

However, we do hold a record of a decision from the Deputy Director – General Organisation Support, (a member of the Senior Leadership Team) relating to the current policy. This decision record is included in the document schedule below. The approval request is attached (items 5 and 6). The email record (item 7) confirms the approval.

In both items 5 and 7, we have reflected the feedback from the Public Service Association, and how we responded to this in our final policy.

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the documents listed in the schedule of documents, subject to information being withheld under section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons, or deceased persons.

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

Nāku noa, nā



Karyn Thompson
Chief People Officer
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

SCHEDULE OF DOCUMENTS

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	24 March 2025	Current Flexible Work Arrangements Policy	Released in full
2	27 September 2019	Old Flexible Work Arrangements Policy	Released in full
3	14 February 2025	Memo on WFH and remote work approving authorities	Released in full
4	20 February 2025	Email record of the decision on item '3'	Released in part
5	13 March 2025	Email seeking approval of updated Flexible Work Policy	Released in part
6	13 March 2025	Email attachments for item 5	Released in full
7	13 March 2025	Email record of the decision on item '5'	Released in part

