



10 April 2025

9(2)(a) privacy

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Official Information Act Request
Our Ref: OIA 2026-0056

I refer to your Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) request received on 12 March 2026 asking for:

“...information relating to business rules, policies, guidance, and approval processes governing Chief Executive (or equivalent Tier 1 leader) international travel. Specifically, I request:

1. *Copies of any current policies, internal guidance, or business rules governing international travel by the Chief Executive (or equivalent).*
2. *Any specific provisions relating to:*
 - a. *The addition of personal leave or private travel to an official overseas work trip.*
 - b. *Cost-sharing arrangements where personal travel is added to a business trip.*
3. *Approval processes required where personal travel is appended.*
4. *Whether this travel is publicly disclosed.*
5. *Further, a list of instances, within the last 3 financial years (including any planned travel to the end of this financial year), where personal travel was appended to official international travel by the CE (or equivalent), including how cost apportionment was handled.”*

Information being released – parts one to three and five

Under the Public Service Act 2020, the Public Service Commissioner is also the Chief Executive of the Public Service Commission. In this capacity, the Commissioner performs both the statutory functions of the Public Service Commissioner and the chief executive functions for the Commission as an organisation.

In the past three financial years, there has been one instance where the Commissioner undertook personal travel following an official international trip. In such circumstances, the

Commission seeks reimbursement directly from the Commissioner for any costs incurred as a result of the personal travel.

Please find enclosed and listed in the table below the Commission's Travel Policy in response to parts one to three of your request.

Date	Document Description	Decision
August 2024	Public Service Commission Internal Policy – Travel Policy	Released in full

Information publicly available - part four

Chief Executive expenses are published annually and released on the Public Service Commission's (the Commission's) website at the following link: <https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/publications/public-service-commissioners-expense-disclosures>.

Therefore, I am refusing part four of your request under section 18(d) of the OIA on the grounds the information is publicly available.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact Enquiries@publicservice.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.

Please note that we intend to publish this response (with your personal details removed) on the Commission's website.

Yours sincerely



Nicky Dirks
Manager – Ministerial and Executive Services
Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission



Travel Policy

Version	5.0 (August 2024)	Contact	Manager Finance, Performance, and Assurance
Policy Owner	Kaikōmihana Tuarua Deputy Chief Executive Enabling Services	Approved	August 2024
SharePoint	Internal Policies	Due for Revision	August 2026

Our Commitment

Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission (the Commission) is committed to ensuring all travel expenditure will be reasonable and necessary with a good business reason. The Commission will ensure all travel returns the best possible return on investment, prioritises the health, safety, and security of the traveller, and takes our carbon emission plan into full consideration.

Kaupapa | Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure all Commission staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities while travelling on Commission business.

Hōkaitanga | Scope

This policy to all employees, secondees, and contractors engaged by the Commission.

Translation | Policy

All travel expenditure undertaken by the Commission, including any associated accommodation or motor vehicle usage, should:

- **have a justifiable business purpose** that is consistent with the Commission's objectives. A justifiable business purpose means a reason that would make clear sense, supported by evidence of the need for the spending and evidence that a range of options have been considered.
- **be moderate and conservative** when viewed from the standpoint of the public and given the circumstances of the spending. It includes considering whether the justifiable business purpose could be achieved at a lower cost.
- **follow proper process** as outlined in Appendix 1. This includes using the Commission's travel provider (FCM travel), getting approval from an appropriate delegation holder and following the correct process for any expenditure claims
- **take account of safety and security considerations.** Staff and managers are expected to always consider the safety of travellers and be fully aware of any security and public health concerns for international travel.
- **consider our commitment to lowering our carbon emissions.** The Commission is committed to reducing carbon emissions by 21% by 2025 and travel is a major source of emissions.

The Commission should always consider the appropriateness of travelling in person. The COVID-19 response saw many businesses and Government agencies invest in technology-enabled solutions to allow for efficient and effective communication channels, which do not involve travelling. Within this new environment, the benefits of travelling may no longer outweigh the cost involved (i.e. monetary, public perception, staff safety, and carbon emissions) when other options are available. Technology-enabled solutions (such as Zoom, Skype or Teams meetings) should be considered first, where possible, to avoid unnecessary in-person travel.

Air travel

The Commission requires that staff always book the best value and most efficient flights to business destinations. This will often result in booking economy airline tickets several weeks in advance of the travel time to ensure the best value fares, where it is practical to do so. The procedures for booking air travel are covered in Appendix 1.

International Travel

International travel approval is governed by the [International Travel Plan](#). This is a plan of all international travel to be undertaken over the financial year which is agreed by the Leadership Team during the budgeting phase. This plan is then entered into the budgets to ensure each budget holder has the funding to cover the international travel. Therefore, Level 2 Managers can approve international travel if it is in their budgets (as it will only be in their budgets if it is in the International Travel Plan). Any unplanned international travel will need to follow the [International Travel Process](#) and be authorised by the appropriate delegation holder (refer Appendix 1).

International travel should use economy class as these are cheaper both financially and in terms of carbon emissions. Staff must not travel by plane in premium economy/business class unless the following are met:

- The flight time is greater than 9 hours.
- The flight is the most direct to the destination.
- There are no economy class fares available, or none that have the requisite flexibility to accommodate for any uncertainty in timing.

For all official overseas travel, staff must inform [security](#). This is to ensure any identified security and public health risks have a management plan. For national security clearance holders, all travel (personal or official) must be reported to [security](#). For more information and guidance, visit our [Protective Security page](#) on DORIS.

Motor vehicles

Taxis and rideshare

The Commission expects the use of taxis or rideshare services to be moderate, conservative, and cost-effective relative to other forms of transport. Where other forms of transport are available (public transport), these should be considered as possible alternatives.

Where taxi cards are issued, these should be in an individual's name as this improves transparency of taxi costs. Taxi cards should only be used for Commission business-related travel.

The Commission acknowledges that, in lieu of taxis, some staff may wish to use a ridesharing service (such as Uber). This can be done at the staff member's own discretion. However, if using a personal credit card then documentation must be provided to prove that the trip was taken for business purposes (such as including in the claim the business reason for the trip, proof of payment of the fare and the reason a rideshare was used over a more conventional method of travel).

Taxis and rideshares must not be used to travel between the workplace and staff members' homes unless there is a justifiable reason to do so (such as safety concerns due to leaving work at a late hour, and the trip has been pre-approved where practical).

Rental cars

The most economical type and size of rental car is to be used, consistent with the requirements of the trip. Any fine (parking or traffic offences) incurred while using a rental vehicle are the responsibility of the driver.

Where rental car hire is unavoidable for the purpose of business travel, staff members must ensure they are receiving the smallest and most fuel-efficient vehicle (electric or hybrid where possible) that will meet their needs (including in terms of terrain and weather). Rental cars should only be hired where this is the most practical option, or where it is more cost-effective than other options. Any fines incurred on the rental car or by the driver of the rental car will be paid by the driver, not the Commission.

Private vehicles

- The Commission will reimburse costs incurred while using a private vehicle for business purposes. This must be approved by a delegated authority before the travel occurs (unless there is an existing agreement in place).
- Private vehicles should not be considered if travel by other means is more practical and cost-effective.
- The reimbursement for private vehicles is set by Inland Revenue and is a formula based on distance travelled (found on www.ird.govt.nz). For documentation, a screenshot of the route from google maps (or similar) is appropriate – provided it clearly states the departure point, destination, and distance.
- Any fines (e.g., parking or traffic offences) will not be covered by the Commission.
- Staff members cannot claim to cover the costs of travel from work to home.

Safe Driving Guidelines

Staff using personal or rental vehicles should follow the [Safe Driving Guidelines](#).

Accommodation

Staff will book accommodation as far in advance as is practical. This ensures that accommodation is booked when most affordable. When booking accommodation, staff should ensure that it is clean and safe, within a reasonable proximity to the place of business, and that Wi-Fi is included within the cost for domestic travel. For any international travel, it is recommended you do not use Wi-Fi for security reasons.

The Commission will cover reasonable expenses for meals while travelling. Hotel meals can be charged through the Commission's official travel provider. Any expenditure on alcohol, movies or mini bar will not be reimbursed.

Appendix 4 provides guidance on the appropriate cost of accommodation and meals.

Materiality

Travel prices are constantly changing and often the price quoted when seeking approval is no longer the price available when the travel is booked. To prevent the need for unnecessary re-approval, delegated approval will cover up to 10% above the quoted amount to allow for price fluctuations. If the price increases by more than 10% of the amount approved, new approval will be required.

Please note that this principle does not apply where:

- an increase in price after approval is attained takes the total above the approvers delegation limit

- the increase in price means the cost exceeds the guidance in this policy where guidance is given and the approver has not given authority to exceed that guidance (e.g. accommodation).

Other travel issues

Telecommunications equipment

For domestic travel, use trusted wi-fi for justifiable work purposes or hot-spot from your work device. For international travel, hot spotting off your work device is the preferred option. However, some for international destinations this may not be possible. This will be advised upon reporting your travel to the security inbox.

Cash advances

If a Commission employee is required to travel to a destination, or in such a way, that having a cash advance would serve a justifiable business purpose, one may be given. Receipts are required to be documented for any use of said cash, and where receipts are unavailable, cash use must still be documented and explained. Any excess cash at the end of the travel period must be returned to the Commission.

Per Diems (Public Service Fare)

If a Commission employee is travelling internationally for work related to the Public Service Fare, they will receive a Per Diem. This is an amount payable for each night's accommodation, meals and incidentals while working overseas. No documentation or reconciliation of unused Per Diems is required.

Per Diems are payable in accordance with the rates established quarterly by the Pacific Island Forum. Per Diems will be adjusted for any accommodation, meals, or incidentals which are already covered by the travel. Further guidance on Per Diems is provided under Appendix 1.

Tipping

The probity issue associated with tipping is that it is discretionary and usually undocumented expenditure. The principle of moderate and conservative is particularly relevant.

Commission staff are expected not to tip while travelling for work in New Zealand. It is acceptable to tip in countries where it is local practice and considered appropriate. In such cases, the Commission requires that the expenditure is noted, and an explanation is provided on the claim, both as to the expense and why there is no receipt.

Private travel combined with work travel

Commission staff can go on private travel before, during, or at the end of travel paid for by the Commission, provided there is no additional cost in doing so and the private travel is only incidental to the business purpose of the travel. Any additional costs incurred as a result of private travel must be paid for by the staff member.

Spouses, partners, or other family members accompanying travel

The Commission will not usually pay for travel costs for any accompanying spouses, partners, or other family members. On the rare occasion where this involvement directly contributes to a clear business purpose, the travel will need to be pre-approved in-line with this policy by a level 1 delegation holder.

A travelling staff member should discuss with their manager if they intend any spouse, partner, or family member to accompany them on work-related travel regardless of whether the Commission contributes to the costs. This is to ensure the Commission is fully aware of any personal benefit and costs like insurance are considered.

Stopovers

Commission employees should avoid stopovers and take direct flights where possible. Any stopover that the Commission pays for should have a clear business purpose, be moderate and conservative, and pre-approved. This could include a staff member flying long distance in economy class requiring a short (24-hour) stopover to aid their recovery when they arrive at their final destination, or when otherwise unavoidable (i.e., is required by flight schedules) or is the most time- and cost-efficient option. If so, the stop-over must be pre-approved and must not exceed the cost of a direct flight option.

Where an unscheduled stopover occurs, the Commission may provide reimbursement for reasonable costs. Stopovers made through the staff member's own choice will not be claimable to the Commission.

Upgrades, Frequent Flyer programmes and airport expenses

Flight upgrades may be accepted, provided there is no additional cost to the Commission, and you have met your obligations under the Code of Conduct.

While travelling on official business, Commission staff will not collect frequent flyer miles or Airpoints.

The Commission will not cover the cost of excess baggage expenses unless you are travelling with heavy or bulky items for official business or medical reasons.

You may discuss a Koru Club membership with your manager if you travel on official business regularly.

Laundry

The Commission will reimburse the cost incurred of laundry while travelling for three nights or more, or where a stay has been unexpectedly extended due to unforeseen circumstances and the traveller does not have sufficient clothing.

Emergencies

When travelling, ensure the contact details of Commission's official travel provider is with you. They are available 24/7 and will support you in any travel related emergency (missed flights, hotel issues, etc). The Emergency Card details are:

Policy Number: TG8123

Contact Phone number: +64 9 359 1678 (if you are in the USA the number is 1-866-8114-3375)

Appendix 1: Travel Procedures

Bookings and approval on the Travel Booking System and Finance 1

All travel arrangements must be approved prior to booking. Travel must be booked through the Commission's official travel provider (FCM Travel). Accommodation is also booked through our provider, ensuring the best overall price for your trip. Where possible staff should not book their own travel and accommodation.

Domestic travel bookings and approval

Domestic travel is booked using the electronic portal provided by FCM. Travel booked in this way must be approved by the person with the correct delegation. Refer to Appendix One.

International travel bookings and approval

International travel is booked manually by contacting FCM. The process for international travel booking is provided [here](#).

Finance 1 Approval

Invoices from FCM Travel are sent on a monthly basis and are approved by the Deputy Commissioner Organisational Capability and Performance in Finance 1. International travel approvals are attached and all costs are assigned to the correct cost centres.

Expense Claims

The Commission will cover the cost of any reasonable expense associated with your business travel. To request a reimbursement, you will need to fill in an [Expense Claim form](#) and attach receipts, or photos of the receipts, to verify your expenditure. This is then sent to invoices@cass.govt.nz.

Any expenses outside of the HRG system (travel expense reimbursements) will be approved in Finance 1 by the delegation holder as per the Travel Delegations section (refer to Appendix 3). The delegated approver for any expense claim reserves the right not to approve travel expenses if they consider the expense to be unreasonable or no receipts have been provided. It is advisable to raise any questions regarding expense claims with your manager.

Per Diems

International travel relating to the Public Service Fale will receive Per Diems. Per Diems cover accommodation, meals, and incidentals for work relating to the Public Service Fale. The following approach is taken in determining the correct Per Diems amount:

- Per Diems will be paid according to the rates published quarterly by the Pacific Island Forum.
- The Per Diem amount will be adjusted for any accommodation, meals, and/or incidentals already provided.
- The Per Diem rates provided by the Pacific Island Forum are in local currency. Per Diems will be paid in NZD at the current exchange rate.

Appendix 2: Roles and Responsibilities

Role / team	Responsibility
Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the travel policy and guidance before requesting travel. • Complete the required memo to document approval for international travel.
Travel Bookers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request quotes for travel • Book travel in the FCM system or work with FCM to make an offline booking. • Ensure all approvals are correct and documented prior to making the offline bookings.
Finance, Performance and Assurance Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the Travel Policy and guidance documents. • Monitor travel expenditure to determine if updates to the guidance are required. • Attach international travel approval memos to travel invoices as they are received.
Deputy Chief Executive Enabling Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve payment of monthly HRG invoice for all travel.
Manager Workplace and Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Onboarding and training for all new Travel Bookers • Manage the travel booking provider relationship, including any concerns or issues raised by the travel bookers or approvers.

Appendix 3: Travel Delegation Holders

Traveller	Type of Travel	Delegation to authorise
Employees who are not members of Te Mana Arataki and do not hold a budget	Domestic	Budget holder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 2 up to \$50,000 • Level 3 up to \$20,000
	International (part of International Travel Plan)	Level 2 manager (Deputy Chief Executive)
Budget holders who are not members of Te Mana Arataki	Domestic & International (part of International Travel Plan)	Level 2 manager (Deputy Chief Executive)
Te Mana Arataki members	Domestic and International	Authority retained by the Public Service Commissioner
Public Service Commissioner	Domestic and International	Chief Legal Officer
All employees, excluding the Deputy Commissioner Public Service Fale, who are travelling for work relating to the Public Service Fale	Domestic and International	Deputy Commissioner Public Service Fale

No one in the Commission is allowed to approve their own travel.

The Public Service Commissioner can approve all travel as a back-up option except their own and the Chief Legal Officer.

Appendix 4: Guidance on the cost of travel

To provide guidance and encourage consistency, the following guidance is provided on what is considered acceptable travel expenditure under the principles of moderate and conservative. Please note that this appendix is provided as guidance and delegated authorities can approve above these amounts if they choose.

Meals

Expenditure	When is this allowed	Amount	Documentation
Breakfast	When staying away from home for business reasons	\$25 per meal	Receipt
Lunch	When staying away from home for business reasons	\$25 per meal	Receipt
Dinner	When staying away from home for business reasons	\$50 per meal	Receipt

It is recommended that expenditure on meals will only be reimbursed when you have been asked to stay away from home. Expenditure on meals where the travel occurs in a single day should not be reimbursed.

If staff require a greater meal expense, for example when travelling with a client, this must be pre-approved by a level 2 manager or above. Any alcohol expense with a meal will not be funded by the Commission.

Accommodation

For accommodation in Auckland, Wellington, Hamilton or Christchurch, the rate should be no more than \$250 per person, per night. For accommodation outside of these cities the rate should be no more than \$200 per person, per night.