

14 September 2021

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RESPONSE TO AN OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUEST

On 16 July 2021, you contacted the Ministry for Pacific Peoples (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *The latest two staff surveys relating to morale, job safety, security, bullying and harassment and similar from all departments*
- *In whatever format or formats, it has been communicated to senior leadership.*
- *And any resulting changes from leadership including emails to staff and/or unions*

We apologise for the delay in responding to your request.

The Ministry values its people as its greatest asset and as being critical to championing and advocating the voices of Pacific communities in the delivery of policies and programmes designed to achieve the vision of Pacific Aotearoa – *we are confident in our endeavours, we are thriving, resilient and prosperous Pacific Aotearoa.*

The 2020/21 financial year saw the Ministry encounter a significant period of growth and opportunity, as it worked to realise its vision, and continued to lalanga (weave) the foundations needed to deliver meaningful outcomes for Pacific peoples. In addition to this, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted an urgent need to respond swiftly to the needs of Pacific communities, as a vulnerable people, and ensure their safety and recovery.

The Ministry has always invested in staff development, wellbeing, capability, and cultural competency programmes, to enable development of thought leadership, diversity and inclusion, and personal development of its staff. The last two years has been no exception.

The Ministry's growth from 68 staff (at the beginning of the 2020/21 year) to 127 (by the end of the 2020/21 year), was critical to strengthen the Ministry's capability and capacity for the delivery of the following key work programmes:

- Pacific Aotearoa Community COVID-19 Recovery Fund
- Pacific Community Content – COVID-19 Campaign
- All of Government Pacific Wellbeing Strategy
- Improving Housing for Pacific Families and Communities
- Supporting Economic Development for Pacific Communities
- Ensuring Pacific Languages thrive in Aotearoa New Zealand
- Toloa – STEM Programmes
- Tupu Aotearoa Programme
- Pacific Research and Evaluation

The growth led to the establishment of the Housing and Toloa teams to deliver work programmes specific to housing and youth, and the expansion of the Tupu Aotearoa Programme, with

managers now based across the country working with providers to support Pacific Peoples into training and employment. Additionally, the Ministry established its Community Initiatives Unit to focus on COVID-19 funding for Pacific communities, and the Research and Evaluation Unit – the only dedicated unit in the country focusing on Pacific communities.

Given the exponential growth, the Ministry needed to contemplate how to best position itself to manage the expansion and ensure the needs of its staff are met physically, emotionally, culturally, and professionally – bringing about the Ministry’s ‘Building our Fale – Growth Plan’.

Building our Fale involved an in-depth talanoa (discussion) of various forms, held across the Ministry beginning early in 2021, to explore the options for working more effectively to achieve the Ministry’s strategic goals. The Ministry provides opportunities for meaningful engagement with staff to share updates and highlights related to work, to celebrate milestones for individual staff, recognition of achievements and significant events.

The Ministry is committed to fostering an empowered employee experience so that the organisation has a solid foundation for cultivating trust and confidence amongst staff and creating a sense of belonging, which will improve productivity and efficiency of an engaged workforce.

In lieu of a formal staff survey, the Secretary for Pacific Peoples and Chief Executive for the Ministry for Pacific Peoples (the Secretary) regularly seeks out staff feedback about proposals for change in operations, development of policies, community engagement, and staff wellbeing and engagement. The consultation process with staff about the Growth Plan provided more opportunities for ongoing dialogue, to understand the thoughts and feedback from every team within the Ministry. This included:

- regular meetings with Tautua (executive leadership team) Te Ivinui (directors) and managers
- facilitating a targeted business unit engagement approach by dedicating at least 40 hours of time spent meeting with each business team – at least three times
- providing frequent updates through internal communications, including fortnightly All Staff Meetings.

As communicated to you on 27 August 2021, the Ministry has not made a decision about the timing for when it will undertake its staff survey, until the new staff have had an opportunity to integrate themselves in the organisation, and understand the organisations vision, values, processes, and strategies. This information is therefore withheld under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Act, as it is under active consideration. The release of this information is likely to prejudice the ability of government to consider advice, and the wider public interest of effective government would not be served.

The Ministry is committed to creating a culture where all employees feel valued, safe, and free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination. The Secretary and Tautua are responsible for leading and endorsing the Ministry’s related policies and procedures (Wellbeing policy, Health and Safety policy, Harassment and Workplace Bullying Prevention policy etc), and are expected to model appropriate behaviours in the workplace.

You might be interested to know that much work has been done this year to lift the Ministry’s focus on staff wellbeing, including, but not limited to:

- the recruitment of dedicated staff to deliver the Ministry’s Wellbeing work programme as part of organisational development and learning programmes
- the establishment of the Ministry’s Health, Safety and Wellbeing committee
- standard fortnightly All-Staff Meetings

- consistent wellbeing messaging delivered by the Tautua (the Ministry's Leadership Team)
- cultural competency and unconscious bias training programmes
- regular team planning sessions
- celebrating identity through various cultural activities for the Pacific Language Week Series
- welcoming ceremonies to honour and celebrate the arrival of any new staff
- regular Hiva Malie sessions to learn Pacific pese (songs) and support staff to embrace an important aspect to many Pacific cultures
- in addition to EAP, access to resources for everyday life, such as BeingWellPlus – a self-service portal built on the four pillars of wellness: EatingWell, SleepingWell, MovingWell, and ThinkingWell.

In response to COVID-19 and the changes of Alert Levels over the past year, the Ministry's flexible working arrangements have been embedded with 100 percent of its staff equipped with the tools they need to work remotely and flexibly. By doing this, the Ministry supports its people to:

- achieve a better work/life balance
- work remotely across regional offices and from home
- be prepared for flexible working through provision of home equipment, laptops, and mobiles
- get the guidance they need to ensure they stay safe when they work remotely.

Furthermore, as a population agency, the Ministry prides itself on being part of a Pacific Aotearoa story where diversity is celebrated and identity is valued. The Ministry is guided by its Diversity and Inclusion Strategy which is built on the Te Kawa Mataaho Papa Pounamu work programme and focuses on growing the diversity of staff, promoting inclusion, enabling flexible working, strengthening emotional agility, and supporting gender pay equity.

The Ministry aims to be an exemplar employer and public service ensuring all its people and stakeholders, including the communities it serves, feel valued, supported, and respected – and is committed to building and nurturing a diverse workforce to ensure the inclusion and involvement of all its staff is reflected in the work we do.

In support of the principles and purposes of the Act, the Ministry proactively publishes its responses to Official Information Act requests. As such, this letter, and the attachments, will be published on the Ministry for Pacific Peoples' website. Your personal details will be removed, and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

Should you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact the Ministry at: oiia_request@mpp.govt.nz.

If you are dissatisfied with this response, you have the right, under section 28(3) of the Act, to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

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