



15 November 2022



Ref: OIA-2022/23-0212

Dear 

Official Information Act request relating to overseas air travel

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 6 October 2022. You requested the following information (please note your request has been split into parts for ease of reference):

“You will be aware of the impact of air travel on climate change. You will also be aware that the government has declared a 'climate emergency'.

The worst passenger emissions in descending order are first class, business class, premium economy class, economy class.

Since Labour formed a government in October 2017 through to today please provide the following information regarding taxpayer funded overseas air travel.

Part One

Ministers:

*Number of first class flights
Number of business class flights
Number of premium economy class flights
Number of economy class flights*

Ministers spouses:

*Number of first class flights
Number of business class flights
Number of premium economy class flights
Number of economy class flights*

Jacinda Ardern:

*Number of first class flights
Number of business class flights
Number of premium economy class flights
Number of economy class flights*

Jacinda Ardern's spouse:

*Number of first class flights
Number of business class flights
Number of premium economy class flights
Number of economy class flights*

Part Two

Governor General:

Number of first class flights

Number of business class flights

Number of premium economy class flights

Number of economy class flights

Governor Generals partner:

Number of first class flights

Number of business class flights

Number of premium economy class flights

Number of economy class flights

Part Three

MPs:

Number of first class flights

Number of business class flights

Number of premium economy class flights

Number of economy class flights

MPs partners:

Number of first class flights

Number of business class flights

Number of premium economy class flights

Number of economy class flights

Part Four

Government officials/civil servants (excluding those listed under the above categories):

Number of first class flights

Number of business class flights

Number of premium economy class flights

Number of economy class flights

Part Five

The guidelines state "Members of Parliament are automatically members of the Air New Zealand Airpoints programme. Ministers are strongly encouraged to use any Airpoints earned from Vote funded sources to offset travel costs that would otherwise be a charge to the Vote." For any of the above travel what percentage of the time were airpoints used to "offset travel costs that would otherwise be a charge to the vote" and what percentage were used by those listed above for their own personal benefit. What steps/procedures, if any, are in place to ensure that the above persons do indeed use the airpoints to "offset travel costs that would otherwise be a charge to the vote" instead of 'pocketing' the benefit personally.

Part Six

Has government officials looked at requesting that Air NZ simply scrap Airpoints for the above person, in lieu of providing lower airfares? If so please provide all information on this.

Part Seven

The attached overseas travel guidelines make mention of the need to be mindful of the financial costs. I note that despite the government declaring an environmental emergency there is zero mention of including the environmental costs of air travel in general and also

flying first class or business class instead of premium economy or economy. Please advise details of all information held around any environment considerations in regards to air travel, including reducing the number of flights and/or flying premium economy or economy.”

As previously advised, parts one and five of your request, in so far as these refer to Ministers has been transferred to the Department of Internal Affairs for response.

Part Two

The Governor-General, staff supporting the Governor-General, and family members accompanying the Governor-General in the performance of the Governor-General’s official duties are not subject to the Act, and any related information held by DPMC is not considered official information as per section 2(f) of the Act. I am therefore not required to respond to your request to the extent that it relates to the Governor-General’s official programme.

Part Three

Information regarding the number of flights taken by Members of Parliament (MPs) is held by Parliamentary Services, who are not subject to the Act. I can advise however that expenses information for MPs, including for air travel, is published every quarter and is available through the following link: <https://www.parliament.nz/en/mps-and-electrates/mps-expenses/>

Part Four

Please refer to the below table which outlines the number of individual international flights taken by DPMC officials between 1 February 2020 and 30 June 2022. As previously advised, this is the only timeframe for which flight data is available. Please note for completeness, flight data for officials of National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) officials has also been included as NEMA is a departmental agency hosted by DPMC.

DPMC

Flight Class	Number of Flights
<i>Economy</i>	115
<i>Premium Economy Class</i>	14
<i>Business Class</i>	29

NEMA

Flight Class	Number of Flights
<i>Economy</i>	22
<i>Premium Economy Class</i>	4

It is important to note that DPMC can only provide information that it holds. To obtain information regarding the number of flights taken by government officials/civil servants not

employed by DPMC, you may wish to consider making a request direct to that agency (if you have not done so already). Details for other government agencies are available on the following website: <https://www.govt.nz/>

Part Five

DPMC does not hold information regarding the percentage of time Airpoints were used to “offset travel costs that would otherwise be a charge to the vote.” Information regarding DPMC’s Airpoints policy is contained within the DPMC’s travel guidelines, an extract from which is provided below:

Loyalty Club Memberships

Airpoints and other travel benefits

Staff are prohibited from earning Airpoints dollars and other rewards from travel-related loyalty schemes on business travel. Air New Zealand status points have no negative cost implications for DPMC or NEMA and may be accrued. These should not be used in such a way as to increase DPMC or NEMA carbon emissions.

Part Six

DPMC does not hold any information regarding the scrapping of Airpoints in lieu of providing lower airfares. This part of your request is therefore refused under section 18(g)(i) that the information requested is not held.

Part Seven

In response to this part of your request, please find below relevant excerpts from DPMC’s Travel Policy for its staff. This policy advises DPMC and NEMA staff that they are required to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in response to climate change alongside other public sector agencies as part of the Carbon Neutral Government Programme.

Policy Statement

6. This policy guides DPMC and NEMA decisions on approving work-related travel by:

b) minimising DPMC’s and NEMA’s carbon footprint by reducing the volume and intensity of air travel

d) balancing the requirements to select the lowest carbon-emitting options with business requirements and the overall cost of travel

Travel Planning

11. DPMC and NEMA are required to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in response to climate change alongside other public sector agencies as part of the Carbon Neutral Government Programme. Travel is a significant contributor to GHG emissions which must decrease every year in order to achieve our emissions reduction targets.

13. If travel must be undertaken, the proposal must identify:

e) the modes of travel which could be employed and their relative carbon footprints available for the journey using the Toitū Travel Calculator Emissions Calculator (toitu.co.nz); and

f) the feasible options available taking into consideration the default position of economy-class booking, total emissions, cost, the health, safety and security of the traveller, and any personal or wellbeing requirements.

Consideration

24. The approver must identify the modes of travel which could be employed and their relative carbon footprints available for the journey using the Toitū Travel Calculator Emissions Calculator (toitu.co.nz).

Travel Bookings

30. Carbon offsets must not be purchased at the point of booking. All emissions offsets for DPMC and NEMA are managed centrally as part of the emissions reporting process.

Travel Benefits

Frequent flier loyalty points

DPMC and NEMA staff are prohibited from earning AirPoints dollars and other rewards from travel-related loyalty schemes on work-related travel. Air New Zealand status points have no negative cost implications for DPMC and may be retained by the traveller. These should not be used in a manner likely to increase DPMC or NEMA's carbon emissions.

Additionally, guidelines for DPMC and NEMA staff members travelling internationally are contained within DPMC's travel guidelines, an extract from which is outlined below:

Travelling internationally

Class of international travel

DPMC and NEMA's standard for international air travel is economy class. Consideration in justifying a higher class of travel must include:

- *the total additional greenhouse gas emissions incurred by a higher class of travel*

This response may be published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website during our regular publication cycle. Typically, information is released monthly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

Yours sincerely



Chris Gianos
Acting Executive Director
Strategy Governance and Engagement