



12 August 2021

REF 2122-0233

Privacy of natural persons

Tēnā koe Privacy of natural persons

Thank you for your email of 2 August 2021 to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

*“...a copy of any guidance, policies, or codes of conduct regarding MBIE staff dating/MBIE staff romances/MBIE staff affairs.”*

There is no MBIE policy, guidance or code of conduct specifically regarding MBIE staff dating or romantic relationships between staff members. Guidance in relation to staff personal relationships is broadly covered in our Code of Conduct (Code) and *Declarations of Interest Policy*. MBIE staff, contractors and consultants are bound by the standards outlined in our Code. The Code focuses on acting fairly, impartially, responsibly and in a trustworthy manner, all of which are key to our work as public servants.

Our Code aligns with relevant employment agreements, legislation, other internal policies and Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission’s *Standards of Integrity and Conduct* (<https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/our-work/integrityandconduct/>). The Code requires staff to ensure their actions are not affected by personal interests or relationships. Page 6 of the Code is most relevant to your request, and states that:

- staff will not access or work on matters for their families, friends or acquaintances, nor provide them with unauthorised advice or assistance; and
- if staff feel a personal relationship means they cannot be objective in the performance of their duties, they will raise this with their manager immediately.

All MBIE staff have a duty to put the public interest above their personal interests when carrying out their official duties. As public servants, we need to work to the highest standards of integrity in everything we do, to retain the trust and confidence of the public, our clients, Parliament, and the Ministers we report to.

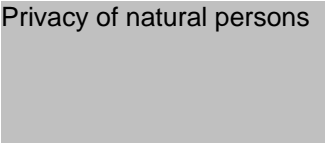
Our *Declarations of Interest Policy* helps MBIE staff, contractors and consultants identify, report and manage real or perceived conflicts of interest. Where staff have a real or perceived conflict of interest arising from the nature of their work or the position they hold, they are required to declare it in our Declarations of Interest Register. For example, declaring a personal relationship with another member of staff which might interfere with their ability to act objectively in doing their job. Declaring real or perceived conflicts of interest provides transparency, enables appropriate management of the potential conflict, and helps ensure the decisions we make are legitimate, justifiable, independent and fair.

There are also online training modules available to our staff, which provide guidance for staff conduct and declarations of interest. Our induction course contains two compulsory modules (*Conduct at MBIE* and *Understanding Declarations of Interest*), which complement the Code and *Declarations of Interest Policy* and can help inform staff understanding of those documents. All of the above documents, modules and guidance are available for all staff on or through our intranet.

Thank you again for your request. Section 28(3) of the Act gives you the right to refer my response to an Ombudsman for review. You can find out more by emailing [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by calling 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā

Privacy of natural persons



David Bowden  
**Head of Integrity**  
**Ngā Pou o te Taumarū**