



28/09/2023

Ashley

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Tēnā koe Ashley

OIA: 1317195 – Microsoft Teams chats

Thank you for your email of 31 August 2023 to the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) requesting the following information:

- 1. Copies of the Ministry's policies, procedures, and processes regarding the use of teams by staff members, including requests to access teams chats by managers.*
- 2. How many requests for access to staff members' teams chats have been made by managers and/or people leaders in the past 12 months? What justifications or reasons are required when lodging a request to access staff members' teams records? Are the staff members advised when these requests are lodged as part of the process? Is privacy a factor considered when deciding whether to grant access*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

The first part of your request has been interpreted as excluding guides regarding the use of Microsoft Teams (such as tutorials on how to make calls). Three documents relating to Microsoft Teams, and broader documentation relating to information security and privacy policy and use have been identified in scope of **part one** of your request. These are being provided to you as **Appendix A**, and are outlined in the below **Appendix A Document Table**.

One mobile phone number has been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act, to protect the privacy of natural persons. As required under section 9(1) of the Act, I have considered the public interest in releasing the information withheld. I do not consider the public interest considerations favouring the release of this information are sufficient to outweigh the need to withhold it at this time.

In response to **part two** of your request, in the event that a manager seeks access to a user's online information, such as OneDrive contents, Emails, and Teams chats, it is a requirement that the Service Desk obtains approval from the Ministry's People Services team. Access is not granted automatically.

In cases involving security events or issues, requests for access will be assessed by our Security team, with a focus on the specific security concern, rather than a people focus.



Additionally, there is an eDiscovery feature that allows access to chats, but this privilege is exclusively available to members of the Audit Team or the Exchange Team.

Upon receipt of a request to access Teams chats, People Services require confirmation of the specific intent of the search, and will determine if that purpose is appropriate before granting permission. Appropriateness will be determined based on a number of factors, including that the search has a clearly articulated purpose, being a concern that falls under Code of Conduct or similar considerations, including those matters listed as Not Permitted in the IT Use Policy attached as Document 2.

There has been one search request of this nature received and granted in the period 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023.

Staff members are not advised prior to such a search taking place, due to the strict rationale for granting these requests, as set out above. As Microsoft Teams and other channels are work tools, the expectation is that staff use them primarily for this purpose and adhere to the IT Use Policy. It is therefore appropriate for any alleged or suspected breaches of this policy to be handled in confidence while they are being investigated.

Please note, we may publish this response on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.

Thank you again for your email. You have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review my decision on your request, in accordance with section 28 of the Act. You can do this by writing to info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or to Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Nāku noa, nā



Zoe Griffiths
Hautū | Deputy Secretary
Te Pou Rangatōpū | Corporate

Appendix A Document Table

#	Title	Decision on release
1	Microsoft Teams	Release in full.
2	Information and Communication (IT) Use Policy	Release in full.
3	Information privacy and security policy.	Release in part. Information has been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act.