



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

2 OCT 2019

James McNutt

fyi-request-10710-54d418f5@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear James McNutt

On 16 August 2019, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *For the two weeks from Monday 5 August to Friday 16 August 2019 how many calls were answered inside 5 minutes, how many between 5 and 10 minutes, between 10 and 15 minutes and on in 15 minute intervals; plus number of calls which hung up due to lack of response*
- *broken down by hour of day and day of week, as well as when the call centre took its first call and last call.*

The Act only applies to information that is held by the Ministry. There is no obligation on the Ministry to create information in order to respond to a request.

The Ministry does not report call time information of this nature for its own business needs and as such, does not have code developed to do reporting of this nature. The Ministry would need to create a new code to run in order to report on call wait times in the way you have requested. As such, your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act because the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

I am, however, able to advise that wait times vary depending on time of the year, date and time of day and depending on the reasons why people call. The Ministry maintained an average speed to answer of 15 minutes 39 seconds in the month of August this year.

I appreciate that at times there are significant waits on our contact centre lines and we have been working very hard to improve this experience for people who call Work and Income. Some of the changes we have and are implementing are:

- Recruitment and training of additional staff to respond to the caller volume,
- Upfront messaging on our phone lines about the current wait times, and
- Implementing CallMe (a call back system) over the last four weeks to the Seniors, Housing and Students phone lines. This is now available from 24 September 2019 through the Work and Income contact centre as well.

The function of contact centres has evolved to include provision of more assistance over the phone. For example, the contact centres now provide hardship assistance for school uniforms and stationary. As such, the Ministry delivers services to an

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increasing number of people over the telephone. To meet increased demand for these services, the Ministry is currently recruiting for contact centre staff to ensure that there is enough staff to manage the increase in workloads.

Your email raises some valid points and the Ministry would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further. Geoff Cook, General Manager, Contact Centre and Digital Service has offered to have a phone conversation with you about the call centre wait times and the work that is underway in this area. If you wish to take up this offer, please email OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz with either a phone number or private email address and we can arrange for Geoff to make contact with you.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding contact centre wait times, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Geoff Cook
General Manager, Contact Centres and Digital Service