



13 FEB 2020

William Martin
fyi-request-11181-708b2c5b@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear William Martin

On 10 September 2019, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- 1. The number of families requesting food grants from Work and Income in the Auckland Region since 26th of October 2017*
- 2. The number of families receiving food grants based upon the Otago Survey in the Auckland region since 26th of October 2017*
- 3. The average food grant amount broken down by the number of dependents since 26th October 2017 in the Auckland regions*
- 4. The number of times a beneficiary was only permitted to buy food from a single location using their payment card in the Auckland region since the 26th of October 2017*

Please provide this data by quarters and provide a breakdown by ethnicity, age and sex.

On 24 December 2019 the Ministry responded to questions one, two, and four. This response addresses question three of your request:

- The average food grant amount broken down by the number of dependents since 26th October 2017 in the Auckland regions*

Work and Income, a service line of the Ministry, provides hardship assistance to help people pay for essential items or services they need urgently. Hardship assistance includes Special Needs Grants (SNGs) which provide non-taxable, one-off recoverable or non-recoverable financial assistance to people, such as food grants. In most cases SNGs for food do not have to be paid back.

The Ministry has worked to improve the accessibility of assistance, including SNGs for food being granted by our Contact Centre or through our online service, MyMSD. People no longer need to attend a service centre for this emergency assistance.

More information about food grants is available on Work and Income's website at: www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/urgent-costs/food.html

You have asked for the data to be broken down by a number of demographics, as well as by quarter and the number of dependents. If the way the data is presented does not meet your requirements, please submit a follow up request clarifying how

you would like the data presented and the Ministry will progress with it in a new response.

You are provided with four data tables in the attached Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet. The data breaks down SNGs in the Auckland region recorded for 'Food' for the period 1 September 2016 to 30 June 2019.

- Table One: The number of Special Needs Grants in the Auckland region for 'Food' for the period 1 September 2016 to 30 June 2019 broken down by gender and by quarter.
- Table Two: The number of Special Needs Grants in the Auckland region for 'Food' for the period 1 September 2016 to 30 June 2019 broken down by age group and by quarter.
- Table Three: The number of Special Needs Grants in the Auckland region for 'Food' for the period 1 September 2016 to 30 June 2019 broken down by marital status, number of children and by quarter.
- Table Four: The number of Special Needs Grants in the Auckland region for 'Food' for the period 1 September 2016 to 30 June 2019 broken down by the ethnicity of the client and by quarter.

All tables represent a count of grants, not individuals; the same person may have been granted an SNG more than once, and a single grant may be used to purchase food for more than one person. The amount granted may not be the same as the amount spent.

In order to protect client privacy, some values are suppressed and are represented by an 'S'. The Ministry is unable to provide you with the exact number as releasing this information is likely to risk identifying the individuals concerned. As such, this information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in the information.

Please note in Table Four, the ethnicity classification that is used to construct this table does not necessarily align with the current Statistics New Zealand classification of ethnicity. Ethnicity details recorded by the Ministry have been gathered under a variety of classification methods as clients come into contact with the Ministry. The ethnicity data may be self-identified based on an individual's preference or self-construct.

Further information regarding benefits and hardship payments is available on the Ministry's website. The Benefit Fact Sheets provide a high-level view of trends in hardship information over the past five years. The Fact Sheets present numbers and characteristics of clients who have received hardship assistance at the end of the current quarter and for the equivalent quarter one year ago and five years ago.

The Benefit Fact Sheets are available at: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/.

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 and the excel spreadsheet on the Ministry'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 SNGs for 'food' in the Auckland region, 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



Bridget Saunders
Manager Issue Resolution, Service Delivery