



Jeremy Roundill  
[fyi-request-12585-327d3c33@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-12585-327d3c33@requests.fyi.org.nz)

15 APR 2020

Dear Jeremy Roundill

On 7 April 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information about businesses who have applied for the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy:

- *Business name*
- *NZBN*
- *Number of employees paid*
- *Total amount paid*
- *Application date*

As you are aware, the Ministry has published information about successful applicants for the wage subsidy through a search function here: <https://services.workandincome.govt.nz/eps/search>. This search is set up similarly to the Companies Register, and requires searchers to know the names of the businesses they are searching for.

The search provides the number of employees paid, and the total amount paid for each employer. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(d) of the Act as it is publicly available.

As you may be aware, the Ministry experienced high demand for the wage subsidy employer search engine shortly following its release, which caused issues for some people wanting to access it. The Ministry has now increased capacity on the site to enable more people to use the search engine.

The search engine does not, at this time, include all employers. Due to the volume of data needing to be uploaded, the Ministry is doing this in stages. Initially, employers with more than five employees and a trading name have been uploaded. The Ministry has a team of people working to update the list on an ongoing basis.

The Ministry's reporting does not currently electronically collate the New Zealand Business Number (NZBN) and the date on which each business applied for the Covid-19 Wage Subsidy and to do this reporting, Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of applications to collate this information. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, as substantial manual collation would be required to provide this information. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry could answer your request given extra time or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have determined that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced

You may be able to identify the NZBN of businesses identified using the Ministry's COVID-19 Wage Subsidy search tool by locating the business on the New Zealand Companies Register here: <https://companies-register.companiesoffice.govt.nz/>.

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 available to the wider public. 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](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding businesses in receipt of the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy, 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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

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Bridget Saunders  
**Manager, Issue Resolution  
Service Delivery**