



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

Chris Johnston
fyi-request-12595-97a7017e@requests.fyi.org.nz

29 MAY 2020

Dear Chris Johnston

On 9 April 2020, you contacted the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) through FYI.org requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *A data set in Excel or csv file with the following columns for the last 5 years, by month, to the end of March 2020, for the whole of New Zealand:*
 - *Column 1 – District Health Board within which the person resides,*
 - *Column 2 - Age group at death (in 10 year bands),*
 - *Column 3 - Number of people receiving New Zealand Superannuation at the start of the period,*
 - *Column 4 - Deaths during the period - that is, the Ministry has been notified to stop paying National Superannuation/Pension and/or a date of death was obtained by any means (eg. death notice).*

On 1 May 2020, the Ministry informed you that information regarding which District Health Board (DHB) region individual clients reside in cannot be provided, as this information is not held by the Ministry. However, the Ministry offered to provide you with a geographic breakdown based on the Ministry Service Centre responsible for the client's case management. You responded that the region the individuals reside in is required, and you would additionally like the Ministry Service Centre region added as a column in the data.

Please find the following Excel sheets attached:

- Table One shows the New Zealand Superannuation and Veteran's Pension population, and cancellations for reason of death, during the period between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2020, broken down by quarter, Ministry Service Centre region and age group.
- Table Two shows the New Zealand Superannuation and Veteran's Pension population, and cancellations for reason of death during the period 1 January 2015 and 31 December 2019, broken down by calendar year, Territorial Local Authority (TLA) region, and age group.

In order to protect client privacy, some values are suppressed and are represented by '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 and public interest in the information.

You will notice that in Table One, you have been provided with information regarding the period between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2020, by quarter, rather than by month as you have requested. This is because we are only able to provide data following the Ministry's existing reporting conventions. This enables us to present data in a clear and concise manner that can be easily reconciled against public information already presented in our online publications and portals.

In Table Two, you have been provided with information regarding the period between 1 January 2015 and 31 December 2019, by calendar year, rather than by month or by quarter, as requested. The Ministry is unable to provide the data broken down further as the figures are too small, and would have to be heavily suppressed in order to protect privacy.

In both tables, you have been provided with information regarding the age band groups 18-74, 75-84 and 95+, rather than in 10-year age bands as you have requested. In the same vein as the time periods as mentioned above, the Ministry is also unable to provide the data in 10-year age bands as the figures are too small, and would have to be heavily suppressed in order to protect privacy.

About 1% of NZS cancellations are for under 65 year olds, being non-qualified spouses. These numbers are too small to report separately here, so have been included with the 18-74 year old age group.

As stated previously, the Ministry does not hold information regarding which DHB region the individuals reside in. Therefore, I am refusing your request for this information under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act as the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry. The data in Table One instead provides a geographic breakdown based on the Ministry's Service Centre responsible for the client's case management. A client may not necessarily reside in the same area as their Service Centre.

In regards to your additional request for a column to be added for the Ministry's Service Centres, the Ministry is unable to provide the data in one table, as when provided alongside the TLA, the figures would become too small and heavy suppression would have to be applied in order to protect privacy. In order to provide you with as much helpful information as possible, we have provided you with the two tables showing the data in two different ways.

If the Ministry were to provide data which had been broken down further, figures for some categories of individuals would have been suppressed or aggregated due to privacy concerns. The Ministry would have also applied secondary suppression rules when required. It is likely that following this process, the Ministry would not have been able provide you with substantial data and the Ministry may have had to refuse your request.

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. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter and attachments 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 the number of New Zealand Superannuation cancellations due to reason of death, 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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'B' followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

pp Bridget Saunders
Manager
Issue Resolution, Service Delivery