



MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
*Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora*

Bowen State Building, Bowen Street, Wellington 6011, PO Box 1556, Wellington 6140 • Telephone: 0-4-916 3300 • Facsimile: 0-4-918 0099

- 3 APR 2013

Ms Katherine Raue  
[kateraue@gmail.com](mailto:kateraue@gmail.com)

Dear Ms Raue

Thank you for your email of 2 March 2013 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

*"All information regarding Ms Michelle McGreal's conviction for Benefit fraud, particularly anything related to whether or not she is repaying the money owed."*

As you will be aware Ms McGreal was prosecuted for benefit fraud of \$77,800 as a result of not declaring her relationship while claiming a benefit as a single person. She was sentenced to 26 weeks home detention and 200 hours community work. Information about the proceedings may be available from the Ministry of Justice.

Regarding your request, I am unable to provide you with further specific information about Ms Michelle McGreal as the Ministry does not release information about individual clients. As such I am refusing this part of your request under section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act. I do not believe that the public interest outweighs the need to protect the privacy of natural persons in this instance.

I can tell you that the Ministry has a high proportion of clients (including those prosecuted for benefit fraud) repaying monies they owe. Of those owing the Ministry money ninety-two per cent of current clients are making repayments, while eighty-five per cent of former clients have paid or are repaying monies owed within 12 months of leaving the benefit system. The Ministry will continue to collect this money until the debts have been repaid. This can mean a lifetime debt for some fraudsters.

You may be aware that on 20 February 2013, the Government announced new measures to prevent, detect and catch welfare fraud. These new measures will:

- prevent cases of fraud by making it easy for people to do the right thing;
- work with other government agencies to make it harder to commit fraud; and
- take a smarter approach to catch people committing fraud.


One of the new initiatives relates to relationship fraud. Relationship fraud is where a person misrepresents their relationship status to get, or continue to receive, a benefit. It is proposed that a new offence will hold partners to account where they are found that they were aware of their partner fraudulently claiming a benefit. This will mean that the fraud debt will be shared by both partners and they are both accountable for the repayment of the debt.

Page 1 of 2

I am sorry I cannot be more helpful at this time. You have the right to seek an investigation and review of my response by the Ombudsman, whose address for contact purposes is:

The Ombudsman  
Office of the Ombudsman  
PO Box 10-152  
WELLINGTON 6143

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Iona Holsted', written in a cursive style.

Iona Holsted  
**Deputy Chief Executive Students, Seniors and Integrity Services**