



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

Patrick Hill

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16 DEC 2020

Tēnā koe Patrick Hill

On 2 December 2020 you emailed the Office of the Minister for Social Development and Employment, Hon Carmel Sepuloni, requesting under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) the following information:

- *Any information in regard to how many individual tvs MSD has funded the purchase of for clients (whether loaned funds or given funds)*
- *A total of how much this has cost between 26 October 2017 and the most recent date for data available*

On 4 December 2020, your request was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) for response because the information to which your request relates is operational in nature.

The Ministry of Social Development, through Work and Income, provides recoverable and non-recoverable financial assistance to help people meet an immediate need for essential items such as food, health costs, power and other costs.

These payments are available to any person as long as they meet the income and asset test, and they are unable to meet the cost for an essential need from any other source. Work and Income ensures that people receive their correct entitlement to any other financial assistance as part of the application and assessment process.

Work and Income assists people to manage their costs in the longer term, not just with immediate and urgent assistance. It is important to understand why the client cannot meet these costs, to provide the most appropriate form of assistance. The applicant also has an obligation to manage their own finances with the help of Work and Income. This may include seeking financial advice from budgeting services.

Further information about financial assistance and eligibility can be found on the Work and Income website: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/individuals/a-z-benefits/index.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/individuals/a-z-benefits/index.html).

Decisions to grant assistance for such items as a television are exceptional, and may only be made by the Service Centre Manager and Branch Manager of a Work and Income office based on a beneficiary's circumstances. Generally these are not costs that would be determined as an emergency or immediate need.

As there is no specific payment category for televisions, I am unable to provide you with this information as it is held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of

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files. As such I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

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

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.

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 granted assistance for televisions, 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.

Ngā mihi nui



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