



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

Dale Smith
fyi-request-14949-567c8308@requests.fyi.org.nz

6 APR 2021

Dear Dale Smith

On 18 March 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *I would kindly like to request in percentage form the amount of Supported Living Payment applications that have required a Designated Doctor report that have either gone on to be approved (and subsequently the percentage of declined applications).*
- *I would like a starting point of quarterly for the last 7 years (from when Supported Living Payment replaced Invalids Benefit) however am open to a shorter time period in the interests of timeliness.*

The role of a designated doctor is to provide an independent medical opinion to the Ministry. A referral to a designated doctor can be completed for Jobseeker Support, Supported Living Payment, Sole Parent Support, Child Disability Allowance and Supported Living Payment for a person being cared for.

The Ministry may consider referring a client to a designated doctor when:

- the clients GP has indicated in the Work and Income medical certificate that they are not best placed to provide the information,
- the diagnosis is unclear,
- capacity for part-time work is unclear,
- the information provided in the medical certificate or other supporting health or disability information is ambiguous or conflicting,
- a previous Work and Income medical certificate contains a substantially different diagnosis or recommendation,
- the client is engaged in activities that appear to be at odds with recorded incapacities or with work capacity information,
- there is inadequate information in the medical certificate or other supporting health or disability information to establish medical eligibility to Supported Living Payment,
- the client is unable to provide existing reports and/or a medical certificate to support an application or at medical review for Supported Living Payment, or
- the client chooses to see a designated doctor (for clients applying for or currently on Supported Living Payment).

The Ministry does not centrally record how many designated doctors' assessments were required to support applications for the Supported Living Payment. If this information were recorded, it would be held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. As such, I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the 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
- 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.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding SLP and Designated Doctors reports, 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, appearing to be 'KS', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Kate Satterthwaite
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services