



20 February 2024

C.A. Fowler

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Tēnā koe C. A. Fowler

### **Official Information Act request**

Thank you for your email of 23 January 2024, requesting information about the Ministry's timeliness standards for processing applications for financial assistance and for processing Reviews of Decision (RODs).

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

I will first provide an explanation of how the Ministry assesses timeliness for processing applications and RODs, before responding to your request for a breakdown of timeliness by financial quarter and service centre.

#### *Applications for financial assistance*

In order to ensure that an accurate and timely service is being provided, the Ministry's National Quality team undertakes a random and independent fortnightly sample of actions processed by Ministry staff who engage with clients. Each case is checked to ensure that the benefit application or review has been processed in a timely manner.

Timeliness is deemed to have been met when the service provided to a client occurs within five working days from the date the last piece of information is received to enable a decision to be made.

The Ministry's minimum standard for client timeliness is 90%. In the financial year ending 30 June 2023, the Ministry's official timeliness result was 93%. The official results of the most recent sampling were reported in the Ministry's 2022/23 Annual Report, which you can access here: <https://msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/corporate/annual-report/2023/msd-annual-report-2023.pdf>.

The Ministry is committed to fostering a client-focused quality culture that empowers staff to make accurate and timely decisions that meet our clients' needs while still complying with legislative and business requirements.

## *Reviews of Decision*

Every month the Client Advocacy and Review team undertakes a sample of Review of Decision reports of Service Delivery, to check whether they are in line with National Standards. The National Standards have previously been published on the Ministry's website, here: [www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/official-information-responses/2023/may/09052023-information-on-review-of-decision-applications-and-benefit-review-committees-statistics-from-the-annual-report.pdf](http://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/official-information-responses/2023/may/09052023-information-on-review-of-decision-applications-and-benefit-review-committees-statistics-from-the-annual-report.pdf).

Timeliness standards for RODs are measured by the following:

- Internal Review stage:
  - An acknowledgement letter being sent out within 24 hours of receipt of ROD, and
  - Internal Review completed within 5 working days.
- Report to the Benefit Review Committee stage:
  - Reports to the Benefit Review Committee completed within 14 days of receiving it, and
  - Delay reasons have been fully documented (if applicable).
- Report of the Benefit Review Committee stage:
  - BRC process completed within 32 days of ROD being received (including outcome letter being issued to client), and
  - Delay reasons have been fully documented (if applicable).

The timeliness result for the financial quarter ending 30 September 2023 was 21%. For the financial quarter ending 31 December 2023, the timeliness result increased to 24%. The timeliness result includes the Internal Review stage, the report to the BRC, and the report of the BRC.

We are working to improve the timeliness results of RODs. The Client Advocacy and Review team are actively working alongside Report Writers and other Ministry staff involved in the ROD process, including offering training and guidance with all stages of the review process.

Additionally, in August 2023 the Ministry appointed a project team to address outstanding RODs and to improve timeliness with newly received RODs. The project team has been working specifically with Seniors and Centralised Services, as the areas which receive the highest amount of RODs.

### *Your request for performance data*

I am unable to provide you with a further breakdown of timeliness standards by financial quarter or by service centre. In order to provide you with this information, the Ministry would need to divert personnel from their core duties and allocate extra time to complete this task. The diversion of these resources would impair the Ministry's ability to continue standard operations and would be an inefficient use of the Ministry's resources. As such, your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, requires substantial collusion. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

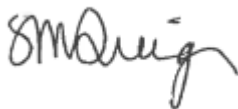
I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your requests given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

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 my decision on your request regarding timeliness standards, 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

pp. 

Magnus O'Neill  
**General Manager**  
**Ministerial and Executive Services**