

Hon Louise Upston

Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector
Minister for Disability Issues
Minister for Social Development and Employment
Minister for Child Poverty Reduction



O Banfield

fyi-request-26846-899565c1@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear O Banfield

Official Information Act Request

Thank you for your email of 16 May 2024, requesting the following information:

Please detail relevant correspondence and discussion with the current government about action or plans to reduce child poverty in line with the Child Poverty Reduction Act 2018.

Specifically, please share information regarding government discussion and action to reduce child poverty's 'material hardship' measure to their 2023/2024 target of 9%, from the current statistic.

Additionally, I request any relevant information that indicates consideration for child poverty impacts in enacting specific policies listed below:

- *Removing public transport subsidisation*
- *Enacting 90-day no-cause tenancy evictions*
- *Redundancies at Stats NZ (the child poverty measure of 'persistent poverty' can no longer be measured)*
- *Reintroducing 90-day employment trial periods*

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) and have interpreted your request for information to be for official advice to reduce child poverty specific to government discussions and actions for the stated policies from when I took office in November 2023. My decision on your request is set out below.

Please find enclosed the following documents:

- DPMC-2023/24-582 – Aide Memoire – *Implications of discontinuing the Living in Aotearoa survey for your responsibilities as the Minister for Child Poverty Reduction*, dated 14 December 2023
- DPMC-2023/24-514 – Report – *Policies to help achieve the Government's Child Poverty Reduction Targets*, dated 21 December 2023:
 - *Attachment A – Progress towards the Child Poverty Targets*
 - *Attachment B – Reducing the number of children in main benefits as a poverty reduction tool*

- DPCM-2023/24-920 – Report – *Review of the second intermediate child poverty reduction targets*, dated 13 March 2024

Note that the Aide-Mémoire, *Briefing to the Incoming Minister – Child Poverty Reduction*, dated 27 November 2023, has been proactively released. You can find this report at the following link: www.dpmc.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2023-11/aide-memoire-2022-23-885-supp-briefings-cpr.pdf

In regard to the first document listed above (DPMC-2023/24-582 – Aide Memoire – *Implications of discontinuing the Living in Aotearoa survey*), it is important to note that the Government Statistician has statutory independence to decide, independently of Ministers, how all official statistics are produced, including child poverty statistics.

The Minister of Statistics and I sought assurance from the Government Statistician in December 2023 that discontinuing the Living in Aotearoa survey would not impact on Stats NZ’s obligations to deliver child poverty measures and statistics. The Government Statistician wrote to me and the Minister of Statistics in January 2024 providing assurance that he remains fully committed to meeting the obligations to report on child poverty, including supporting me to meet my statutory obligation under the Child Poverty Reduction Act 2018 to set a persistent poverty measure by the end of 2024.

Some parts of the documents I am providing to you are withheld. Some information regarding some individuals is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

Some information is withheld under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Act to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials. The release of this information is likely to prejudice the ability of government to consider advice and the wider public interest of effective government would not be served.

To expedite a response, information not concerning the action or plans to reduce child poverty in line with Child Poverty Reduction Act 2018 specific to your request, has not been included, and has been redacted as ‘Out of Scope’.

Lastly, one further report DPMC-2023/24-1058 - Briefing - *Statutory review of the current ten-year child poverty reduction targets*, dated 10 April 2024, has been identified as containing a small amount of information in scope of your request. I am providing you with an excerpt of the relevant part of the report below in particular paragraph 39, pursuant to section 16(1)(e) of the Act.

‘Some other policy changes, the details of which are still being finalised, could potentially have a negative impact on progress towards reducing material hardship, including changes to the delivery of the Ka Ora Ka Ako school lunches programme and changes to public transport subsidies’.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request with me, including this decision, please feel free to contact my office: L.Upston@ministers.govt.nz.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Louise Upston', with a stylized, cursive script.

Hon Louise Upston
Minister for Child Poverty Reduction