



29 SEP 2015

Mr Gregory Soar
fyi-request-3077-263e3cba@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Soar

On 22 August 2015 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *If MSD via WINZ has ever funded, via Disability Allowance, any pharmaceutical medications that were not subsidised by Pharmac?*
- *If MSD have funded unsubsidised pharmaceuticals through the Disability Allowance scheme what was the largest cost for a single pharmaceutical so covered by MSD / WINZ?*

The Disability Allowance is an income tested, non-taxable form of additional financial assistance available to clients who have additional costs resulting from a disability or medical condition. It is a weekly Work and Income payment for people who have regular, on-going costs because of a disability, such as visits to the doctor or hospital, medical alarms, counselling, pharmaceutical costs, special foods, or travel.

The amount paid is estimated in relation to the actual costs that have been or will be incurred on a regular basis up to the current maximum weekly rate of \$61.69. If a client is claiming assistance for prescription costs, their Disability Allowance payment may increase based on the increase of their prescriptions costs.

In certain circumstances, non-subsidised pharmaceuticals can be funded through the Disability Allowance. In order to determine whether the cost of a non-subsidised pharmaceutical can be included in the Disability Allowance, Work and Income considers whether there is another suitable subsidised or partly subsidised pharmaceutical item available and whether funding from PHARMAC under their Named Patient Pharmaceutical Assessment Policy has been applied for and if so, whether the application has been accepted or declined, and the reasons for it being declined.

The cost of the non-subsidised pharmaceutical can also be included as an additional expense for Disability Allowance if the client's medical practitioner verifies that the pharmaceutical item is essential and there are no suitable subsidised or partly subsidised alternatives available.

Your request for the largest cost of a single unsubsidised pharmaceutical item funded through the Disability Allowance is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. This information is held on individual notes in case files and it would

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require substantial manual collation to address this part of your request. 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.

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



Carl Crafar
Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery