



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA



On 20 July 2016 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *The number of beneficiaries who became entitled to the Child Material Hardship package of \$25 per week on 1 April 2016.*
- *The percentage of beneficiaries who had their supplementary entitlements reduced as a result of this entitlement.*
- *The percentage of beneficiaries who, as a result of having their supplementary entitlements reduced by the full \$25 per week, received a nil benefit increase.*
- *The total number of children lifted out of poverty as a result of this policy.*

On 21 May 2015 the Government announced a \$790 million package to reduce hardship among children in New Zealand's poorest families, as the next step in the Government's commitment to address the long-term drivers of deprivation. The Taxation (Support for Children in Hardship) Act 2015, which came into effect on 1 April 2016, amended the Social Security, Inland Revenue and Educations Acts, to help deliver the key components of the package, which include:

- Increased work obligations for sole parents on a benefit
- A \$25 a week after tax increase in benefit rates for families with children
- More childcare support to help low-income parents into work
- An increase in Working for Families payments to low-income families not on a benefit.

The Minister for Social Development, Hon Anne Tolley, has responded to a written parliamentary question for the number of beneficiaries who received the \$25 increase to their benefits on 1 April 2016 because of the Child Material Hardship package. This response is available on the Parliament website at https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/QWA_04657_2016/4657-2016-darroch-ball-to-the-minister-for-social-development.

The Ministry is unable to provide the number of beneficiaries who had their supplementary entitlements reduced as a result of receiving the \$25 increase to their benefits. There are a number of reasons a person's supplementary assistance may

change, such as a change in their circumstances (for example, a change of medical or accommodation costs) or changes in their employment earnings and this information is held on individual files. To provide the number of people whose benefits have reduced due to the introduction of the Child Material Hardship package would require Ministry staff to review thousands of individual client files and as such your request for this information is refused 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.

As part of the Treasury proactive release for Budget 2015, the report to the Prime Minister titled '*Your material hardship package*' outlined the estimated impact of the package on measured material hardship. The report also provided information about the basic monitoring to be undertaken using the Ministry of Social Development's Deprivation Index. This report is available on the Treasury's website at <http://www.treasury.govt.nz/downloads/pdfs/b15-info/b15-3184358.pdf>.

I hope you find this information helpful. 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



Ruth Bound
Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery