



31 JAN 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

On 22 December 2017, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *The details of how many allegations are received each year and what percentage of these informants remain anonymous and what percentage of informants name themselves?*
- *Is there less chance of investigation if an informant remains anonymous and more chance of investigation if an informant identifies themselves?*

Every year, the Ministry receives thousands of allegations of benefit fraud from members of the public, both anonymous and named. On receipt of these allegations, the Ministry assesses the information provided to determine whether an investigation is required. In making this assessment, the Ministry considers the quality and quantity of the information provided. In some cases, the information provided by the alerger may already be known to the Ministry, or the information may not be specific enough to justify commencing an investigation. Whether an informant identifies themselves does not influence the likelihood of an investigation.

The following table provides the total number of fraud allegations made to the Ministry during the financial years 2012/2013 to 2016/2017.

Table 1: the number of allegations received from members of the public during each of the past five financial years.

	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017
Public allegations received	16,008	14,736	11,592	8,898	8,393

Notes:

- Years provided refer to financial years ending 30 June.

The Ministry does not specifically record whether or not an allegation was made anonymously. This information is recorded on individual case files. In order to provide you with the percentage of informants who remain anonymous or who name themselves, Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of individual case files. As such, this part of your request 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.

The Ministry has considered whether it would be able to respond to this part of your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. The Ministry has 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:

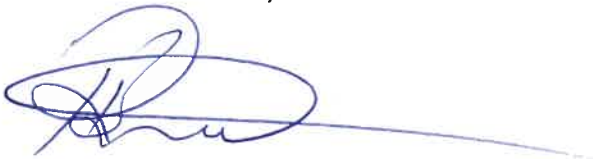
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter available to the wider public shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

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 benefit fraud allegations, 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



Ruth Bound
Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery