



18 JUN 2018



Dear 

On 2 May 2018, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *Any statistics about the number of refugees that have come to NZ and are or have been on any benefit*
- *A breakdown of what types of benefits the refugees have been on*

You were advised that the Ministry is unable to provide information on all refugees and you refined your request to an update of a table on quota refugees provided in a previous Official Information Act request. On 7 May 2018, a Ministry official contacted you, and your request was refined further to:

- *The number of quota refugees who have arrived in New Zealand in the last ten years and are in receipt of a main benefit, broken down by benefit type, as at 31 March 2018.*

New Zealand currently has a customary Refugee Quota of 750 places (+/- 10 per cent). However over the last three financial years, 600 refugees from Syria have been resettled in addition to the annual Refugee Quota (100 places in 2015/16 and 250 places each in 2016/17 and 2017/18) as part of a special emergency intake above the annual quota. In June 2016, Cabinet agreed that the annual Refugee Quota would permanently increase to 1,000 places from 2018/19.

Upon arrival in New Zealand quota refugees receive permanent residence and the usual two year stand-down period for accessing the welfare system is waived. They spend their first six weeks in New Zealand at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre (MRRC) where they participate in a reception programme which aims to build basic social and coping skills required for refugees' new lives in New Zealand and provide information on work and expectations of employment. Prior to arrival in New Zealand refugees are provided with information on working and living in New Zealand and an assessment is completed for each refugee to identify needs and services required once refugees arrive at MRRC.

Following completion of the reception programme refugees are sent to one of seven refugee settlement locations across New Zealand. They are Auckland, Hamilton/Waikato, Palmerston North/Manawatū, Greater Wellington, Nelson, Dunedin and Invercargill. These settlement locations are chosen based on a range of criteria including access to employment opportunities.

The overarching vision of the Refugee Resettlement Strategy is that refugees are participating fully and integrated socially and economically as soon as possible so that they are living independently, undertaking the same responsibilities and exercising the same rights as other New Zealanders and have a strong sense of belonging to their own community and to New Zealand. One of the five goals of the Strategy is “self-sufficiency – all working-age refugees are in paid work or are supported by a family member in paid work.” The outcomes which the Government aim to achieve under this goal are:

- Increased proportions in paid employment (after six months, two years and five years)
- Reduced proportions receiving unemployment related benefits (after six months, two years and five years)

More information about the refugee quota programme and the refugee resettlement strategy is available at the following web link: www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/what-we-do/our-strategies-and-projects/refugee-resettlement-strategy.

The table below shows the number of quota refugees as identified by receipt of the Refugee Settlement Special needs Grant who have arrived in New Zealand in the last 10 years and are in receipt of a main benefit, broken down by benefit type, as at 31 March 2018.

Benefit Group	Quota Refugees
Emergency Benefit	20
Emergency Maintenance Allowance	S
Jobseeker Support related	1,076
Jobseeker Support Student Hardship	S
Supported Living Payment related	182
Sole Parent Support	213
Youth Payment and Young Parent Payment	S
Total	1,497

Notes:

- This table will not count partners or children of primary clients and does not include clients from Australia, Niue, Tokelau, or the Cook Islands
- Working Age is 18 - 64 years of age inclusive as at end of March 2018
- Main Benefits exclude NZ Superannuation, Veteran's Pension, Non-Beneficiary assistance, Orphan's Benefit and Unsupported Child's Benefit
- 'S' represents a suppressed cell to protect clients' privacy.

Please note that in order to protect client privacy some values have been suppressed in accordance with section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act. The Ministry is unable to provide you with the exact number of quota refugees on certain benefits, as the numbers are very low and releasing this information is likely to risk identifying the individuals concerned. As quota refugees make up a small portion of the population and the Emergency Maintenance Allowance, Jobseeker Support Student Hardship, Youth Payment and Young Parent Payment are very specific benefits, releasing these numbers increases the risk of breaching the individuals' privacy. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

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 and any attached documents 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 the number of quota refugees on a main benefit, 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


Cassandra Wise
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