



MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ŌRA

21 NOV 2018



Dear 

On 24 October 2018, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *What is the number of special needs grants that have been **approved** for 2016, 2017 and 2018?*
- *What is the number of special needs grants that have been **declined** for 2016, 2017 and 2018?*
- *What is the total amount granted in special needs grants for 2016, 2017 and 2018?*
- *What is the number emergency benefit applications **approved** for 2016, 2017 and 2018?*
- *What is the number emergency benefit **declined** for 2016, 2017 and 2018?*
- *What is the **total amount granted** in emergency benefit applications for 2016, 2017 and 2018?*
- *Please include whether all of the above are recoverable or not.*

There are a number of ways in which the Ministry may assist clients who have unexpected essential or emergency costs they are unable to pay. Clients are encouraged to contact the Ministry or their local Work and Income site to discuss what support is available to them. There are three main ways the Ministry may assist clients with emergency and unexpected costs:

- **Special Needs Grants:** a Special Needs Grant (SNG) is a one-off payment to help meet an emergency or essential cost. They may be either non-recoverable or recoverable (required to be paid back). You do not need to be on a benefit to qualify for an SNG.
- **Advance Payment of Benefit:** an Advance Payment of Benefit (APB) is a one-off payment available to clients receiving a main benefit who have emergency or essential costs they cannot meet. This is required to be paid back.
- **Recoverable Assistance Payment:** a Recoverable Assistance Payment (RAP) is a one-off payment to which individuals who are not receiving a main benefit may be eligible if they have unexpected emergency or essential costs they cannot meet. This is required to be paid back.

Further information about these different types of assistance can be found on the Work and Income website: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/urgent-costs/index.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/urgent-costs/index.html).

The Emergency Benefit is an income and asset tested benefit payable to people who are in hardship and who are unable to earn enough income for themselves and their family and cannot receive another benefit. The Emergency Benefit is generally paid at the same rate as the benefit that best fits the client's reason that they cannot earn a sufficient livelihood. More information about the Emergency Benefit and who may qualify to receive it may be found on the Work and Income website: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/emergency-benefit/qualifications.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/emergency-benefit/qualifications.html).

As you were advised earlier by the Ministry's media team, information about the total amounts paid for Special Needs Grants in 2016, 2017 and 2018 may be found in the Benefit Factsheets which are available on the Ministry website: [www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/#Latestbenefitfactsheetsrelease1](http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/#Latestbenefitfactsheetsrelease1).

Enclosed are five tables of data in response to the remainder of your questions. In addition to information regarding Special Needs Grants, I have also provided data regarding Recoverable Assistance Payments and Advance Payments of Benefit, as there are commonly used alternatives to SNGs.

- **Table One:** shows the number of SNG applications granted and declined from 2016 through to 30 September 2018, broken down by calendar year.
- **Table Two:** shows the total number of applications granted and declined for Recoverable Assistance Payments from 2016 through to 30 September 2018, broken down by calendar year.
- **Table Three:** shows the total number of applications granted and declined for Advance Benefit Payments from 2016 through to 30 September 2018, broken down by calendar year.
- **Table Four:** shows the total number of Emergency Benefit applications granted and declined from 2016 through to 30 September 2018.
- **Table Five:** shows the total cost to the Ministry for Emergency Benefit payments per financial year from the 2015/2016 financial year through to the 2017/2018 financial year.

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](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding Special Needs Grants and Emergency Benefits, 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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Cassandra Wise  
**Manager, Issue Resolution, Service Delivery**

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**Table One:** The total number of SNG applications granted and declined from 2016 through to 30 September 2018, broken down by calendar year.

| <b>Outcome</b>                   | <b>2016</b>    | <b>2017</b>    | <b>1 January 2018 - 30 September 2018</b> |
|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <b>Granted – Recoverable</b>     | 52,363         | 64,759         | 52,751                                    |
| <b>Granted – Non-recoverable</b> | 494,803        | 616,429        | 517,604                                   |
| <b>Declined</b>                  | 20,555         | 24,435         | 17,438                                    |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>567,721</b> | <b>705,623</b> | <b>587,793</b>                            |

**Table Two:** The total number of applications granted and declined for Recoverable Assistance Payments from 2016 through to 30 September 2018, broken down by calendar year.

| <b>Outcome</b>      | <b>2016</b>   | <b>2017</b>   | <b>1 January 2018 – 30 September 2018</b> |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <b>RAP Granted</b>  | 40,705        | 51,029        | 46,652                                    |
| <b>RAP Declined</b> | 4,259         | 4,447         | 3,561                                     |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>44,964</b> | <b>55,476</b> | <b>50,213</b>                             |

**Table Three:** The total number of applications granted and declined for Advance Benefit Payments from 2016 through to 30 September 2018, broken down by calendar year.

| <b>Outcome</b>      | <b>2016</b>    | <b>2017</b>    | <b>1 January 2018 – 30 September 2018</b> |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <b>APB Granted</b>  | 346,114        | 404,459        | 368,725                                   |
| <b>APB Declined</b> | 15,190         | 15,916         | 12,301                                    |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>361,304</b> | <b>420,375</b> | <b>381,026</b>                            |

**Table Four:** The total number of Emergency Benefit (EB) applications granted and declined from 2016 through to 30 September 2018, broken down by calendar year.

| <b>Outcome</b>       | <b>2016</b>  | <b>2017</b>  | <b>1 January 2018 – 30 September 2018</b> |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <b>EB's Granted</b>  | 8,523        | 6,604        | 3,657                                     |
| <b>EB's Declined</b> | 1,443        | 1,820        | 844                                       |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>9,966</b> | <b>8,424</b> | <b>4,501</b>                              |

**Note:**

- For tables one to four, the figures represent a total number of applications, not a total of clients. The same client may apply for and be granted multiple payments, grants or benefits throughout the year.

**Table Five:** The amount spent by the Ministry for Emergency Benefit payments per financial year from the 2015/2016 financial year through to the 2017/2018 financial year.

| <b>Financial Year</b> | <b>Amount</b>   |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 2015/2016             | \$90,001,159.65 |
| 2016/2017             | \$82,444,089.59 |
| 2017/2018             | \$72,808,690.36 |

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