



26 OCT 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

On 25 July 2018 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *How many people are on "welfare" due to mental health reasons?*
- *The costs associated with this, including any supplementary support.*

Supported Living Payment is a benefit for people who have, or who are caring for someone with, a health condition, injury or disability that severely limits their ability to work on a long-term basis. Further information about Supported Living Payment is available from the Work and Income website here: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/supported-living-payment.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/supported-living-payment.html).

Jobseeker Support is a benefit for people who are not in employment and are looking for work, in part-time employment seeking more work, or have a health condition or disability which affects their ability to work and means they have to reduce their hours or stop work for a while. Further information about Jobseeker Support is available from the Work and Income website here: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/jobseeker-support.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/jobseeker-support.html).

Table 1 enclosed shows the number of people in receipt of Jobseeker Support – Health Condition, Injury or Disability as at the end of each quarter, and those in receipt of the Supported Living Payment, where the individual's primary incapacity is recorded as 'Psychological or Psychiatric Condition'. The table also shows quarterly snapshots of the total weekly net amount that the Ministry pays for these benefits. The Supported Living Payment and Jobseeker Support Health Condition, Injury or Disability payment are made in order to assist individuals in covering their living costs, not the costs of mental health treatment.

Please note that the group of conditions classified as 'Psychological or Psychiatric Condition' vary significantly, including stress, depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and more.

In addition to the above supports for clients with mental health conditions, the Ministry may also provide the Disability Allowance to individuals where their conditions result in on-going costs. Please note that this is only payable where the costs are not fully covered by another agency, and therefore does not apply where the costs of mental health treatment are covered by the Ministry of Health or a District Health Board. Further information regarding the Disability Allowance is available on the Ministry's website here: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/disability-allowance.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/disability-allowance.html).

The Ministry records Disability Allowance claims by reason, two of which may be associated with mental health: 'Counselling' and 'Counselling – transport'. Tables 2 and 3 attached show the number of costs claimed and weekly amount claimed for 'counselling' and 'counselling – transport' in Disability Allowance broken down by end of financial quarter from September 2013 to June 2018. Please note, this is the amount claimed and not necessarily the amount paid.

Where clients have an immediate and essential need for which they require financial assistance, the Ministry may provide hardship assistance in the form of a lump sum payment. These payments include recoverable and non-recoverable Special Needs Grants, Recoverable Assistance Programme payments, advance payments of main benefits. A list of the payments and benefits available can be found at: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/index.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/index.html).

Information regarding the number of hardship assistance payments which were made for mental health treatment and related costs, and the value of these payments, is held on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of 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. Please note that where these payments occur they primarily relate to transport and other associated costs as the costs of treatment itself are funded by the Ministry of Health.

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.

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 and attachments 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 costs associated with mental health, 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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'CWise', followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Cassandra Wise  
**Team Manager, Issue Resolution**

**Table 1: Jobseeker Support Health Condition, Injury and Disability and Supported Living Payment with a primary incapacity recorded as: 'Psychological or psychiatric conditions' broken down by end of financial quarter from September 2013 to June 2018.**

As at the end of	Clients with primary incapacity of: 'Psychological or Psychiatric Condition'		
	Benefit category	Number of clients	Total weekly net amount paid
September 2013	Supported Living Payment related	26,326	\$6,899,387.54
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	24,470	\$5,093,452.14
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>50,796</b>	<b>\$11,992,839.68</b>
December 2013	Supported Living Payment related	26,573	\$6,966,653.55
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	24,983	\$5,217,245.42
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>51,556</b>	<b>\$12,183,898.97</b>
March 2014	Supported Living Payment related	26,732	\$7,001,547.98
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	23,545	\$4,913,150.21
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>50,277</b>	<b>\$11,914,698.19</b>
June 2014	Supported Living Payment related	26,892	\$7,142,773.92
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	23,426	\$4,954,016.35
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>50,318</b>	<b>\$12,096,790.27</b>
September 2014	Supported Living Payment related	27,257	\$7,233,101.07
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	23,698	\$5,007,521.90
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>50,955</b>	<b>\$12,240,622.97</b>
December 2014	Supported Living Payment related	27,365	\$7,259,984.84
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	23,518	\$4,991,312.10
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>50,883</b>	<b>\$12,251,296.94</b>
March 2015	Supported Living Payment related	27,450	\$7,312,702.74
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	22,862	\$4,854,877.91
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>50,312</b>	<b>\$12,167,580.65</b>
June 2015	Supported Living Payment related	27,676	\$7,373,218.34
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	23,669	\$5,030,206.09
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>51,345</b>	<b>\$12,403,424.43</b>
September 2015	Supported Living Payment related	27,768	\$7,396,178.73
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	24,312	\$5,161,658.56
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>52,080</b>	<b>\$12,557,837.29</b>
December 2015	Supported Living Payment related	28,011	\$7,462,197.51
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	24,808	\$5,286,973.58
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>52,819</b>	<b>\$12,749,171.09</b>
March 2016	Supported Living Payment related	28,033	\$7,504,487.85
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	23,759	\$5,089,590.28
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>51,792</b>	<b>\$12,594,078.13</b>

As at the end of	Clients with primary incapacity of: 'Psychological or Psychiatric Condition'		
	Benefit category	Number of clients	Total weekly net amount paid
June 2016	Supported Living Payment related	28,307	\$7,576,045.17
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	24,192	\$5,162,517.07
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>52,499</b>	<b>\$12,738,562.24</b>
September 2016	Supported Living Payment related	28,533	\$7,646,234.91
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	25,352	\$5,427,179.30
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>53,885</b>	<b>\$13,073,414.21</b>
December 2016	Supported Living Payment related	28,797	\$7,720,892.61
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	26,282	\$5,639,703.43
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>55,079</b>	<b>\$13,360,596.04</b>
March 2017	Supported Living Payment related	28,963	\$7,746,809.94
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	25,670	\$5,489,963.90
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>54,633</b>	<b>\$13,236,773.84</b>
June 2017	Supported Living Payment related	29,123	\$7,888,447.53
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	26,180	\$5,660,407.25
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>55,303</b>	<b>\$13,548,854.78</b>
September 2017	Supported Living Payment related	29,334	\$7,947,508.06
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	26,668	\$5,767,887.10
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>56,002</b>	<b>\$13,715,395.16</b>
December 2017	Supported Living Payment related	29,567	\$8,012,195.49
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	27,512	\$5,961,454.43
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>57,079</b>	<b>\$13,973,649.92</b>
March 2018	Supported Living Payment related	29,612	\$8,001,063.63
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	26,464	\$5,712,768.12
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>56,076</b>	<b>\$13,713,831.75</b>
June 2018	Supported Living Payment related	29,843	\$8,177,296.04
	Jobseeker Support - HCD	27,455	\$5,999,270.39
	<b>Total clients</b>	<b>57,298</b>	<b>\$14,176,566.43</b>

**Notes:**

- This table includes working age clients only (18 to 64 years).
- Jobseeker Support HCD is Jobseeker Support - Health Condition, Injury and Disability.
- Supported Living Payment related includes Supported Living Payment Overseas.
- Total paid is the weekly net benefit amount paid to clients, and does not include any supplementary support they may receive.

**Table 2: Number of costs claimed and weekly amount claimed for 'Counselling' in Disability Allowance, broken down by end of financial quarter from September 2013 to June 2018.**

<b>Financial Quarter End</b>	<b>Number of costs claimed</b>	<b>Weekly amount of costs claimed</b>
September 2013	2,186	\$129,355
December 2013	2,042	\$118,686
March 2014	2,143	\$126,997
June 2014	2,115	\$122,871
September 2014	2,227	\$130,687
December 2014	1,876	\$109,038
March 2015	1,804	\$108,192
June 2015	1,818	\$107,737
September 2015	1,768	\$107,586
December 2015	1,555	\$92,956
March 2016	1,444	\$87,290
June 2016	1,641	\$99,900
September 2016	1,670	\$103,289
December 2016	1,481	\$90,567
March 2017	1,495	\$92,499
June 2017	1,554	\$95,016
September 2017	1,628	\$103,746
December 2017	1,531	\$95,526
March 2018	1,459	\$95,514
June 2018	1,503	\$95,682

**Table 3: Number of costs claimed and weekly amount claimed for 'Counselling - transport' in Disability Allowance, broken down by end of financial quarter from September 2013 to June 2018.**

<b>Financial Quarter End</b>	<b>Number of costs claimed</b>	<b>Weekly amount of costs claimed</b>
September 2013	258	\$5,653
December 2013	229	\$3,990
March 2014	228	\$4,536
June 2014	259	\$4,861
September 2014	271	\$5,643
December 2014	220	\$4,023
March 2015	198	\$4,231
June 2015	216	\$4,440
September 2015	203	\$4,409
December 2015	165	\$3,537
March 2016	145	\$3,307

<b>Financial Quarter End</b>	<b>Number of costs claimed</b>	<b>Weekly amount of costs claimed</b>
June 2016	177	\$3,948
September 2016	171	\$4,371
December 2016	166	\$3,465
March 2017	134	\$2,415
June 2017	147	\$2,817
September 2017	148	\$2,648
December 2017	154	\$3,025
March 2018	113	\$2,178
June 2018	119	\$2,687

**Notes for tables 2 and 3**

- This is a number of 'counselling costs claimed' for each Disability Allowance (DA)
- A client, partner or dependent can claim for both cost types 'Counselling' and 'Transport for Counselling'
- A client may receive one or more Disability Allowances
- A client may be receiving DA for themselves, their partner or a dependent child
- The weekly amount of DA costs reported as claimed is the amount declared by the client, it may not be the amount of DA paid.