



Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Further to your conversation with Elisabeth Brunt, General Manager Ministerial and Executive Services on 6 August 2019, this letter responds to the balance of your request regarding second opinions being:

How many designated health practitioners does MSD use nationwide?

How much money did MSD spend on second opinions sought through designated health practitioners over the past three years?

How much does MSD pay (per appointment) for second opinions through designated health practitioners?

The Ministry of Social Development has a panel of respected medical practitioners, known as 'designated doctors', who provide second opinions on medical information. The Ministry relies on the advice of medical practitioners when testing eligibility for some forms of assistance, including the Supported Living Payment. The need for a second opinion can arise in a range of situations including where advice received is insufficient to determine benefit eligibility. The second opinion can be sought by the client's doctor, a Regional Health Advisor or a Regional Disability Advisor.

The provision of a second opinion assists in determining a person's capacity for work and entitlement to financial assistance. It also assists with helping people to move towards employment.

As at 22 August 2019, the Ministry had 191 designated doctors registered nationwide. A medical practitioner can apply to be a designated doctor and the Ministry works to ensure that there is an adequate spread of medical practitioners nationwide.

Further information regarding designated doctors is available on the Work and Income website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/providers/health-and-disability-practitioners/designated-doctors.html.

The Ministry meets the appointment costs for a second opinion, with the practitioners invoicing the Ministry directly. The following table sets out the costs payable to both the designated doctor and usual medical practitioner for the purposes of a second opinion:

Designated Doctor Fee Schedule	
Designated doctor assessment	\$250 (plus GST)
Administration fee for designated doctor arranging a Host Doctor Report	\$25 (plus GST)
Mileage allowance where the doctor is required to visit the person away from their surgery	\$1.32 per km
Fee for missed appointment (if client reschedules)	\$60 (plus GST)
Fee for missed appointment (if client does not attend at all)	\$125 (plus GST)
Payment to host doctor (usual GP) for providing a report to the designated doctor	\$75 (plus GST)

In the previous three financial years, the Ministry has paid the following costs to designated doctors for second opinions:

Financial Year	Cost (excl. GST)
2016/17	\$393,449
2017/18	\$345,924
2018/19	\$240,875

I hope that you find this information helpful. 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.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding Designated Doctors 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

Manager Issues Resolution Service Delivery