



Dear [REDACTED]

On 17 May 2019, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following data broken down by year (2016, 2017, 2018), gender and ethnicity:

- 1. The total number of grants given by the Ministry of Social Development for Special Needs Grants for dental care*
- 2. The total amount of money paid for Special Needs Grants for dental care by the Ministry of Social Development*
- 3. The total amount of recoverable debt owed to the Ministry of Social Development for Special Needs Grants for dental care*

The Ministry provides recoverable and non-recoverable financial assistance to people to meet an immediate need for essential items such as food, health costs (including medical and dental costs), power and other costs. These payments are available to any person as long as they meet the income and asset test, and they are unable to meet the cost from any other source.

The Ministry recognises that individuals who are in receipt of a benefit may not be able to budget for unexpected dental costs, and support is available for those who meet the criteria to help with the cost of dental work.

The maximum amount payable to a person applying for a non-recoverable Special Needs Grant towards the cost of dental treatment is \$300 within any 52-week period. Where exceptional circumstances apply, this amount may be exceeded, or more than one payment may be made. In situations where there are no exceptional circumstances, or where individuals do not meet the qualifying criteria for a Special Needs Grant, they may qualify for an Advance Payment of Benefit to meet any or all remaining costs.

All dental treatments funded through the Ministry must be provided by a health agency or registered dental practitioner. Examples of a qualifying dental situation include, but are not limited to, root treatment, tooth extraction, tooth restoration and treatment of acute infection.

Please find enclosed 2 tables that show the number and value of advances and special needs grants for dental treatment between 01 July 2015 and 30 June 2018, broken down by whether recoverable, ethnicity, gender and financial year ending 30 June 2018.

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, 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

Table 1: Number and value of advances and special needs grants for dental treatment between 01 July 2015 and 30 June 2018 broken down by whether recoverable, ethnicity and financial year ending 30 June 2018.

Financial year	Ethnic Group	Recoverable						Total
		Yes			No			
		Number of Grants	Value of Grants	Number of Grants	Value of Grants	Number of Grants	Value of Grants	
2015/16	Māori	8,596	\$4,080,617.57	12,109	\$3,352,248.04	20,705	\$7,432,865.61	
	Pacific Island	1,963	\$978,737.53	2,794	\$769,103.37	4,757	\$1,747,840.90	
	NZ European	11,837	\$5,303,724.99	16,432	\$4,511,450.08	28,269	\$9,815,175.07	
	Unspecified	463	\$214,527.05	831	\$230,754.69	1,294	\$445,281.74	
	Other	4,609	\$2,117,913.13	7,265	\$2,007,747.19	11,874	\$4,125,660.32	
	Total	27,468	\$12,695,520.27	39,431	\$10,871,303.37	66,899	\$23,566,823.64	
2016/17	Māori	9,202	\$4,715,524.35	12,152	\$3,371,717.93	21,354	\$8,087,242.28	
	Pacific Island	2,202	\$1,165,913.02	2,975	\$817,322.36	5,177	\$1,983,235.38	
	NZ European	11,935	\$5,792,064.28	15,813	\$4,338,446.67	27,748	\$10,130,510.95	
	Unspecified	625	\$317,920.66	1,068	\$294,819.75	1,693	\$612,740.41	
	Other	5,013	\$2,412,930.85	7,476	\$2,070,536.78	12,489	\$4,483,467.63	
	Total	28,977	\$14,404,353.16	39,484	\$10,892,843.49	68,461	\$25,297,196.65	
2017/18	Māori	9,568	\$5,354,206.22	12,478	\$3,458,853.54	22,046	\$8,813,059.76	
	Pacific Island	2,313	\$1,307,526.42	3,166	\$870,671.88	5,479	\$2,178,198.30	
	NZ European	11,919	\$6,088,316.87	15,774	\$4,304,983.02	27,693	\$10,393,299.89	
	Unspecified	680	\$343,526.20	1,184	\$323,875.68	1,864	\$667,401.88	
	Other	5,067	\$2,569,063.81	7,470	\$2,055,367.31	12,537	\$4,624,431.12	
	Total	29,547	\$15,662,639.52	40,072	\$11,013,751.43	69,619	\$26,676,390.95	

Notes:

- This is a count of grants not clients and the same client may have received more than one Special Needs Grant.

- Ethnicity data is self-identified and multiple ethnicities may be chosen by an individual as fits their preference or self-concept.
- Multiple selected ethnicities are then prioritised into a hierarchy.
- The Māori ethnicity has the highest priority in this hierarchy, followed by Pacific Peoples.
- NZ European has the lowest priority. This is to ensure that smaller and politically significant ethnic groups do not get overwhelmed by the larger ethnic groups.
- A single ethnicity is assigned to an individual based on this hierarchy.
- Ethnic groups do not currently align with Statistics New Zealand ethnicity groupings.

Table 2: Number and value of advances and special needs grants for emergency dental treatment between 01 July 2015 and 30 June 2018 broken down by whether recoverable, gender and financial year ending 30 June 2018.

Financial year	Gender	Recoverable						Total	
		Yes			No			Number of Grants	Value of Grants
		Number of Grants	Value of Grants	Number of Grants	Value of Grants	Number of Grants	Value of Grants		
2015/16	Female	17,195	\$8,111,123.02	24,489	\$6,784,688.95	41,684	\$14,895,811.97		
	Male	10,273	\$4,584,397.25	14,940	\$4,086,014.42	25,213	\$8,670,411.67		
	Unspecified	0	\$0	2	\$600.00	2	\$600.00		
	Total	27,468	\$12,695,520.27	39,431	\$10,871,303.37	66,899	\$23,566,823.64		
2016/17	Female	18,075	\$9,210,406.84	24,641	\$6,830,789.30	42,716	\$16,041,196.14		
	Male	10,902	\$5,193,946.32	14,843	\$4,062,054.19	25,745	\$9,256,000.51		
	Total	28,977	\$14,404,353.16	39,484	\$10,892,843.49	68,461	\$25,297,196.65		
2017/18	Female	18,528	\$9,997,854.86	25,081	\$6,926,460.52	43,609	\$16,924,315.38		
	Male	11,019	\$5,664,784.66	14,991	\$4,087,290.91	26,010	\$9,752,075.57		
	Total	29,547	\$15,662,639.52	40,072	\$11,013,751.43	69,619	\$26,676,390.95		

Note: This is a count of grants not clients and the same client may have received more than one Special Needs Grant.