



13 MAR 2020

Dear [REDACTED]

On 10 February 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *How many people in the Gisborne region have sought assistance from Work and Income as a result of the halt on exports as a result of Coronavirus?*

The Ministry is rolling out rapid response teams to help businesses and individuals affected by the economic impact of COVID-19. These teams are working with affected businesses and employees to let them know what services and support the Ministry can help with. Teams are initially being set up in the East Coast, Waikato, Northland and Bay of Plenty regions to respond to emerging economic impacts in those areas. Further teams will be established in other regions as needed.

Services may include:

- connecting people with other government agencies;
- providing advice to people on how to find other work;
- identifying other job opportunities for workers;
- working with employers looking for staff to determine whether upskilling or training is required;
- providing information on income and other support the Ministry offers.

The teams are working with other agencies such as Inland Revenue and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment to co-ordinate support. For those eligible in any part of the country, the Ministry's usual supports are also available if their employment or income has been affected.

The Ministry is offering all available support to assist people through this period of uncertainty and encourages people to get in touch to discuss their individual situation and what help is available. To find out what help may be available, who to contact, or for more information, the Government Helpline is available on 0800 779 997. You can also find more information about the support Work and Income can provide here: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/emergencies/2020/coronavirus.html# null](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/emergencies/2020/coronavirus.html# null).

We help thousands of people every day who are seeking hardship assistance for a variety of reasons. This makes it hard to get reliable data about how many people have applied for assistance as a direct result of COVID-19 Coronavirus. We are in the process of allocating reporting codes to enable us to better extract, collate and verify data relating to COVID-19 Coronavirus to enable us to share more data.

I am unable to provide you with the number of people in the Gisborne region who have sought assistance from Work and Income as a result of the halt on exports as a result of Coronavirus as this information is held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would have to manually review

thousands of files. As such I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

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.

You may be interested to know that the Ministry has a new webpage quoting statistics related to hardship grants for people affected by COVID-19. The webpage is regularly updated and can be found here:

<https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/newsroom/2020/covid-19/covid-19-data.html>.

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 the number of people in the Gisborne region who have sought assistance from Work and Income due to the halt on exports as a result of the Coronavirus concerns, 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

  
Bridget Saunders  
**Team Manager Issue Resolution**