



22 APR 2021

Tēnā koe

On 9 March 2021, you emailed the Rt. Hon Jacinda Ardern requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

1. *Why is everyone not paying for MIQ. People who have been overseas for years and not paying NZ tax are getting accommodation for free. Surely everyone should pay especially as a lot of these people may return overseas once Covid has been curtailed.*
2. *How many returnees have actually paid for MIQ since charges introduced against the total number of returnees.*
3. *Will NZ stop people returning if they have not had the vaccination. If they are NZ citizens then they should have to pay for MIQ no matter what.*
4. *How many returnees have claimed or are claiming a benefit since returning despite not having paid tax in NZ.*

On 31 March 2021, you were advised that question four of your request was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) for response. As such, the Ministry will now be responding to this part of your request.

The Ministry offers a number of different types of financial support to those in need. The types of support a client may be entitled to will depend on their individual circumstances, their specific need at the time, and the eligibility criteria of the relevant type of assistance. More information about the different types of assistance available and their respective eligibility criteria can be found online at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/index.html.

In order to be eligible for most New Zealand benefits, applicants must meet specific residency requirements in order to be successful in their application. Please see the link below for more information on the residency requirements for New Zealand benefits and pensions: www.workandincome.govt.nz/pensions/travelling-or-moving/moving-to-nz/residency-requirements-for-new-zealand-benefits-and-pensions.html.

The Ministry collates information from clients in the process of granting benefit applications, including information on whether the applicant has recently returned from overseas. This is noted in the Ministry's IT system under the label 'Returned to New Zealand'. This identifier is applied manually by Ministry staff to those who, once returned to New Zealand, apply for a main benefit without taking up any taxable employment prior to their application.

The Ministry, however, is unable to determine how many benefit applicants have not paid tax prior to returning to New Zealand as this is not a standard question that is asked when an applicant is applying for a benefit. As such, your request for the number of returnees who have claimed or are claiming a benefit since returning to New Zealand

despite not having paid tax in the country is refused under section 18(g) of the Act as the information is not held by the Ministry.

In an effort to assist with your request, please see **Table One** in **Appendix One** which shows the number of main benefits granted between 1 December 2019 to 31 March 2021 for people that have 'Returned to New Zealand', broken down by month.

Please note that the attached table only provides the number of main benefits granted, based on the 'Returned to New Zealand' identifier, and does not give information about ongoing receipt of benefit, such as whether the applicants have found work since they returned to New Zealand.

As you may be aware, COVID-19 led to thousands of New Zealanders returning home from overseas. Some of whom applied for a benefit on their return. Therefore, there are significant spikes in the data table, especially in April 2020.

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. 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 regarding the number of main benefits granted for people that returned to New Zealand, 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.

Ngā mihi nui



Bridget Saunders
**Manager, Issue Resolution
Service Delivery**

Appendix One

Table One: The number of main benefits granted between 1 December 2019 to 31 March 2021 for people that have returned to New Zealand, broken down by month.

Month	Number of main benefits granted under the 'Returned to New Zealand' identifier
December 2019	702
January 2020	687
February 2020	753
March 2020	1,332
April 2020	4,212
May 2020	1,104
June 2020	693
July 2020	708
August 2020	1,023
September 2020	912
October 2020	720
November 2020	681
December 2020	720
January 2021	504
February 2021	456
March 2021	558
Total	15,768

Notes:

- This is a count of grants. An individual may have more than one grant within a period.
- 'Main Benefits' includes Jobseeker Support, Sole Parent Support, Supported Living Payment, Emergency Benefit, Emergency Maintenance Allowance, Jobseeker Support Student Hardship, Youth Payment, Young Parent Payment and excludes NZ Superannuation, Veteran's Pension, Non-Beneficiary assistance, Orphan's Benefit and Unsupported Child's Benefit
- To protect confidentiality the Ministry of Social Development uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data. These data tables have had random rounding to base three applied to all cell counts in the table. The impact of applying random rounding is that columns and rows may not add exactly to the given column or row totals. The published counts will never differ by more than two counts.