



05 MAY 2021

Tēnā koe

On 10 March 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Information pertaining to the amount of funds paid by your Agency / Organisation / Department / Ministry directly to victims of the March 15, 2019 terror attacks on the two Christchurch Mosques.*
- *This request relates to payments made from 15 March 2019 to 31 December 2020.*

The Ministry offers a range of support to qualifying clients, in the form of main benefits (e.g. Jobseeker Support, Sole Parent Support), New Zealand Superannuation, and supplementary assistance (e.g. Accommodation Supplement, Disability Allowance). However, to support victims of the Christchurch mosques attack of 15 March 2019 who did or do not qualify for a main benefit, the Ministry introduced Christchurch Mosque Attack Assistance.

Paid under the Christchurch Mosques Attack Welfare Programme, and available until 4 June 2021, Christchurch Mosque Attack Assistance enables clients who have been affected by the 15 March 2019 attacks to apply for the following types of payment:

- Emergency Benefit special assistance,
- Temporary Additional Support special assistance,
- Family Tax Credit special assistance,
- Best Start Tax Credit special assistance, and
- Winter Energy Payment special assistance.

To qualify for one or more of the above assistance types, a client must meet the pre-existing qualifications relating to each (e.g., meet the criteria for Emergency Benefit if applying for Emergency Benefit special assistance), except that the usual residency criteria (for all) and cash asset test (in the case of Emergency Benefit) does not apply. Clients must then meet the following additional criteria:

- be an affected person (present during the attack, relation of someone injured, or killed),
- not qualify for a benefit under the Social Security Act 2018, and
- be unable to earn income to support themselves and any dependent family.

More information about Christchurch Mosque Attacks Assistance can be found at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/christchurch-mosques-attack-assistance/index.html.

In response to your questions, please see **Table One** below, which shows the amount paid to clients under the Christchurch Mosques Attack Welfare Programme between 1 June 2019 and 31 December 2020.

Table One: Payments made to victims under the Christchurch Mosque Attacks Welfare Programme between 1 June 2019 and 31 December 2020, broken down by month

Month	Total amount
June 2019	\$40,925
July 2019	\$78,138
August 2019	\$99,937
September 2019	\$70,437
October 2019	\$56,021
November 2019	\$70,258
December 2019	\$55,677
January 2020	\$59,664
February 2020	\$36,659
March 2020	\$34,924
April 2020	\$38,481
May 2020	\$57,851
June 2020	\$43,508
July 2020	\$46,764
August 2020	\$30,624
September 2020	\$28,786
October 2020	\$26,938
November 2020	\$19,555
December 2020	\$18,016
Total	\$913,161

Notes:

- Figures are approximate, as they do not take into account any retrospective reviews of payments that may have occurred.
- The dollar amounts have been rounded and therefore the cells may not sum up to the total value.

As already indicated, some victims of the 15 March 2019 mosques attack received support from the Ministry under the Social Security Act 2018 (rather than the Christchurch Mosques Attack Assistance Welfare Programme). However, we cannot provide you with the full amount that has been paid to victims under every programme and payment type offered by the Ministry. To do so would involve reviewing thousands of files to determine which clients were affected by the attack. This aspect of your request therefore is refused under section 18(f) of the Act on the ground that it requires substantial manual collation.

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.

That said, some victims in receipt of Christchurch Mosques Attack Assistance received additional assistance in the form of Special Needs Grants and Recoverable Assistance Payments, and information relating to these payments is centrally recorded by the Ministry. A Special Needs Grant provides non-taxable, one-off recoverable or non-recoverable financial assistance to clients to meet an immediate need. A Recoverable Assistance Payment, on the other hand, provides non-taxable, interest-free, recoverable financial assistance to non-beneficiaries to meet an essential, immediate need for specific items or services.

Please find **Table Two** enclosed in **Appendix A** attached, which shows the amount of Special Needs Grants and Recoverable Assistance Payments granted to Christchurch Mosque Attack Welfare Programme recipients between 1 June 2019 to 31 December 2020.

It is also worth noting that the Ministry assisted victims of the attack in other ways too, such as by paying for driver licenses and funding for immigration advisors. As these payments did not go directly to clients, however, the Ministry has not included information pertaining to that support in this response. The Ministry has interpreted your request to be only for assistance that has been paid *directly* by the Ministry to the victims of the attacks.

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 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 in regard to funds paid directly to victims of the Christchurch Mosques attacks 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



Graham Allpress
Director, Client Service Delivery
Service Delivery

Appendix A

Table Three: The amount of approved Special Needs Grants and Recoverable Assistance Payments granted to Christchurch Mosque Attack Welfare Programme recipients during the period 1 June 2019 to 31 December 2020, broken down by month and type of grant.

Type of grant	June 2019	July 2019	August 2019	September 2019	October 2019	November 2019	December 2019	January 2020	February 2020	March 2020	April 2020	July 2020	November 2020	Total
Special Needs Grants	\$8,696	\$3,498	\$0	\$250	\$225	\$200	\$200	\$150	\$200	\$300	\$400	\$0	\$200	\$14,318
Recoverable Assistance Payment	\$0	\$319	\$249	\$558	\$250	\$1,258	\$799	\$3,889	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,140	\$0	\$11,462
Total	\$8,696	\$3,817	\$249	\$808	\$475	\$1,458	\$999	\$4,039	\$200	\$300	\$400	\$4,140	\$200	\$25,780

Notes:

- The data only includes those receiving Special Needs Grants and Recoverable Assistance Payments made to active recipients of the Christchurch Mosques Attack Welfare Programme.
- The amount approved at grant may not necessarily be the amount spent.
- These grants were made to 19 distinct recipients of the Welfare Programme.
- Due to rounding, dollar amounts may not sum precisely to the total value.