



20 MAY 2021

Tēnā koe

On 6 March 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Documents under the OIA pertaining to the MSD preferred supplier agreement for the provision of glasses by optical suppliers which started in 2014.*
- *The reasoning for implementing the new policy and any reports/audits/ accounting/ budgets or suchlike which aided in the decision of MSD setting the allocation of \$249. Information from the implementation date (in 2014) or prior is sufficient.*
- *Analyst reports as mentioned above or suchlike, and communications between relevant staff (the lead reviewer, staff (e.g policy analyst) and their line manager and then MSD minister, Paula Bennett) regarding this review/ policy only.*

On 31 March 2021, the Ministry extended the due date of the decision for your request to 28 April 2021, as more time for consultation was necessary.

On 27 April 2021, you were notified that the Ministry has decided to grant your request in part, however, needed more time to prepare the information for release. The Ministry extended the due date to 21 May 2021.

As you are aware, qualifying can apply to the Ministry for \$249 for the cost of eye tests and glasses. A person may be eligible for such assistance if they:

- are 16 or over (if you're 16-19 and have a Youth Service provider, contact Youth Services)
- are a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident
- normally live in New Zealand and intend to stay here, and
- have an immediate and essential need.

It also depends on:

- how much the person and their partner earn, and
- any money or assets the person and their partner have.

More information about the eligibility criteria for assistance with glasses, including how to apply, can be found on Work and Income's website, here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/health-and-disability/glasses.html#null.

In addition, the Ministry has arrangements with certain optometrists and opticians to aid with glasses and eye tests. These are called 'preferred suppliers.' A list of the Ministry's preferred suppliers, and where they are located, can be found here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/health-and-disability/glasses-suppliers/index.html.

In response to your request, please see enclosed the following documents, which the Ministry found in scope of your request:

- *Procurement and Evaluation Plan Optical Goods and Services*, dated 30 August 2013.
- *Memo – RFP, Optical Goods and Services – Inclusion of Progressive lenses as part of Service Specifications*, dated 29 January 2014.
- *Contract Award Report Optical Goods and Services*, dated 26 February 2014.
- *REP/13/03/221 – Preferred Supplier Arrangements for Whiteware and Optical Products Funded through Hardship Assistance*, dated 22 March 2013.
- *REP/13/03/221 – Preferred supplier arrangements for whiteware and optical products funded through hardship assistance*, dated 28 March 2013.
- *REP/13/8/686 – Ministerial direction preferred suppliers for optical products*, dated 15 August 2013.
- *REP/13/11/1036 – Update on whiteware and optical procurement initiatives*, dated 2 December 2013.
- *REP/14/5/355 – Implementation of a preferred supplier arrangement for optical goods and services*, dated 7 May 2014.
- *REP/14/11/861 – Whiteware and optical procurement programmes*, dated 21 November 2014.

Some information is withheld under section 9(2)(b)(ii) of the Act as, if released, it would be likely to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied it or who is the subject of the information. The greater public interest is in ensuring that the commercial position can be maintained.

You will also note that the names of some individuals are withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

Some information is withheld under section 9(2)(k) of the Act, to prevent the disclosure or use of official information for improper gain or improper advantage.

In addition, some information has been withheld as it is out of scope of your request.

Furthermore, in order to provide you with all communications, including emails, between relevant staff about the procurement plan relating to optical suppliers, the Ministry would have to review historic emails of a large number of staff, many of whom may no longer be employed by the Ministry. It has been determined that the diversion of these resources would impair the Ministry's ability to continue standard operations and would be an inefficient use of the Ministry's resources. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act, requires substantial collation. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

Please note, the set amount of \$249 for the provision of glasses was based on the maximum charges provided by the shortlisted suppliers for this requirement. However, this amount does not preclude clients receiving higher amounts of hardship assistance (i.e., in the form of another grant) if required. The \$249 limit was more a reflection of the maximum amount that could be loaded onto the payment card than a pre-determined cut-off point – although most of the optical goods and services did cost less than \$249, based on estimates from short-listed suppliers. The Ministry's Project Steering Group managed the approvals for the provision of goods.

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 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 information about the Ministry's preferred supplier agreement for the provision of glasses by optical suppliers, the implementation of this policy and the communications between relevant staff, 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


R Karen Dawson
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Commercial Operations