



21 MAY 2021

Tēnā koe

On 4 May 2021, the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) received your request, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), for the following information:

- *The Legal/Policy backing for requests by MSD for clients to provide bank statements to use as verification for hardship assistance.*
- *The Legal/Policy backing regarding MSD's capability for clients to be declined for food assistance.*

Work and Income, a service line of the Ministry, provides hardship assistance to help people pay for essential items or services they need urgently. Different types of assistance are available that can be either recoverable or non-recoverable, and deciding which product is most appropriate is determined by the person's need and individual circumstances.

Special Needs Grants (SNGs) provide non-taxable, one-off recoverable or non-recoverable financial assistance to people to meet immediate needs, such as a food grant. Where a need has been identified as essential, or an emergency (for example food or medical-related) a SNG is typically non-recoverable. In other cases, a SNG may be recoverable or non-recoverable depending on what purpose it is paid for.

SNGs are provided for by Welfare Programmes and Ministerial Directions, underpinned by the legislation set out in the Social Security Act 2018. The Social Security Act can be found at the following link:

<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2018/0032/latest/whole.html>.

Information regarding the SNG Programme can be found at the following link:

[www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/legislation/welfare-programmes/special-needs-grants-programme/index.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/legislation/welfare-programmes/special-needs-grants-programme/index.html).

To answer your questions, those wishing to receive hardship assistance for SNGs must meet certain requirements. A client that does not meet the full list of requirements will not be eligible for SNGs such as food assistance. You can find the full list of requirements to qualify for SNGs at the following link:

<https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/qualifications.html>.

One of the requirements for SNG eligibility is for a client to have an essential need, emergency need or need a payment for specific circumstances where the cost cannot be met through any other means. In order to verify this, the Ministry requires clients to meet an income and cash asset test. Clients are asked to provide a bank statement as part of the income and cash asset test.

The principles and purposes of the Act 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](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding Ministry policy on hardship assistance, 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.

Ngā mihi nui



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