



Tēnā koe

On 17 September 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *How many hardship grants have been given out in Limited Employment Zones over the past five years (could this please include a breakdown of what grants have been given, where, and over what time)*

A limited employment location is defined as a place with the following characteristics:

- severely limited availability of work,
- local labour market at a low level - therefore having limited job opportunities (if an area has seasonal work available in the coming year, the area is not considered a limited employment location), and
- lack of public transport to take commuters to an area where work is available.

A client's residential address is used to decide whether they live in a limited employment location.

In 2016, the Ministry changed its data collection to include 'area units'. These area units are locations on the scale of limited employment locations. While some limited employment location data was recorded through 'city' or 'suburb' scale information, the majority the Ministry's data is recorded in area units. As these were only introduced in 2016, we are unable to report data prior to this in this response.

A client who is living in a limited employment location and receiving Jobseeker Support through their local Service Centre must continue to meet the work obligations. These include being available for, and taking reasonable steps to obtain, suitable employment.

Assistance to transition into employment may be available to help clients who are living in a limited employment location, with the essential costs of attending a job interview or taking up paid employment. More information is available here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/employment-and-training/employment-and-work-readiness-assistance/assistance-to-transition-into-employment-01.html.

The Ministry can assist with urgent or unexpected costs via one-off payments such as a Special Needs Grant (SNG), an Advance Payment of Benefit, or a Recoverable Assistance Payment. They are provided to clients in financial hardship and are available only for costs considered essential; it is often known as 'hardship assistance.' SNGs can be recoverable or non-recoverable, depending on the need of the client, whereas an Advance Payment of Benefit and Recoverable Assistance Payment are always granted as recoverable payments (i.e. they will need to be repaid to the Ministry).

Please find **Table One** which shows the number of hardship payments paid to clients residing in Limited Employment Location by each quarter 1 September 2016 to 30 June 2021, broken down by regions and by hardship types.

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
- 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 Limited Employment Locations, 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.

Yours sincerely

Bridget Saunders

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**Manager, Issue Resolution
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