



22 August 2022

Tēnā koe

On 26 July 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *I am hoping to get some more information relating to the quarterly benefit figures released last week:*
 1. *The number of people receiving Temporary Additional Support, as well as the value provided in Special Needs Grants and Benefit Advances, has increased over the past year. Does MSD have any information/context about why this is? Could this be a symptom of the rising cost of living and people needing extra support?*
 2. *A person doesn't need to be on a main benefit to qualify for the Temporary Additional Support or the Special Needs Grant. Does MSD have data about how many of the recipients of those supports also receive a main benefit and how many don't? If you do, could I please have that for the past four June quarters?*

Temporary Additional Support is non-taxable extra help paid for a maximum of 13 weeks. It is paid as a last resort to help clients with their regular essential living costs that cannot be met from their chargeable income and other resources.

Clients must ensure that they are accessing all other assistance available to them and take reasonable steps towards reducing their costs and increasing their chargeable income. For further information regarding Temporary Additional Support please see the following link:

www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/temporary-additional-support/introduction.html

Special Needs Grants provide non-taxable, one-off recoverable or non-recoverable financial assistance to clients to meet immediate needs.

A client does not have to be getting a main benefit to qualify for Temporary Additional Support or Special Needs Grants. For further information regarding Special Needs Grants, please see the following link:

www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/introduction.html

You note that *“the number of people receiving Temporary Additional Support, as well as the value provided in Special Needs Grants and Benefit Advances, has increased over the past year”* and ask whether the Ministry has any information or context about this.

The increase in the level of hardship assistance is largely a result of people’s ongoing struggle to pay for housing. It also reflects the efforts the Ministry have made to ensure people know where to go when they need urgent help to meet essential needs such as feeding their families.

To this end, the Ministry has made it easier for people to access food grants and are also working hard to make sure that people know that the Ministry is here to support them with meeting other essential costs such as power, medical and dental care.

The Ministry encourages anyone who may be facing financial stress to get in touch with us so we can help them consider the best option available to them. An easy way to do this is via our online service, MyMSD or if they need to talk us, they can call on 0800 559 009. Our aim is to work closely with everyone who comes to us so they can receive their full and correct entitlement.

Please find the following two tables attached in response to the second part of your request, in **Appendix A**:

- **Table One:** The number of Temporary Additional Support (TAS) clients as at the end of June 2019, June 2020, June 2021 and June 2022, broken down by benefit group.
- **Table Two:** The number of Special Needs Grants (SNG) for the quarters ending June 2019, June 2020, June 2021 and June 2022, broken down by benefit group. Note that this is a count of grants rather than clients, and the same client may have been granted more than once.

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'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 Temporary Additional Support or Special Needs Grants, 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'AS', written in a cursive style.

Anoanoa'i Siaki
Lead DCE Advisor
Service Delivery