



12 December 2022

Tēnā koe

On 14 November 2022, the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) received a part transfer of your request from the Ministry of Health dated 19 October 2022, for information under the Official Information Act 1982.

The Ministry of Health advised you that part of your request is more closely aligned with our functions and the following part has been transferred to our Ministry for response:

- *"what was the budget and source of funds for the NZ Covid Response including ... compensating and/ or subsidising businesses and families and any other categories of costs and the source of funds for paying these costs - eg overseas borrowing, printing cash etc."*

In March 2020, the Government implemented an economic package in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and you can find information here: www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/budgets/covid-19-funding-allocation-expenditure.

The package consisted of taxpayer funded subsidies for those who were in business and were either self-employed or employed others, and met the eligibility criteria. There were extensions to the package in order to continue supporting employers in retaining their staff through the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of the impacts of COVID-19. All payments pursuant to the package and subsequent extensions are collectively referred to as the wage subsidy.

Since the wage subsidy schemes began, the Ministry has been allocated a total of \$13.292 billion across two financial years to support employers and businesses to retain and pay their employees.

Throughout the last two years, the wage subsidy has enabled rapid support for thousands of New Zealand businesses during a time of uncertainty and

has ensured that employees were able to remain connected to their employers during the COVID-19 lockdowns. The wage subsidy was set up on a high-trust model in order to quickly deliver funds to support workers, families and businesses.

The Ministry has provided the following COVID-19 Economic Supports throughout the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Wage Subsidy (WS) – 27 March 2020 to 9 June 2020
- Leave Support Scheme (LSS) - 27 March 2020 to present (ongoing)
- Wage Subsidy Extension (WSE) – 10 June 2020 to 1 September 2020
- Resurgence Wage Subsidy (RWS) – 21 August 2020 to 3 September 2020
- Short-Term Absence Payment (STAP) – 9 February 2021 to 17 October 2022
- Wage Subsidy March 2021 (WS March 2021) – 4 March 2021 to 21 March 2021
- Wage Subsidy August 2021 (WS August 2021) – from 20 August 2021 to 9 December 2021. This has contained many iterations, which are listed on the Work and Income website at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/covid-19/previous-payments/index.html.

As New Zealand changed Alert Levels during the pandemic, wage subsidy schemes were available to businesses who were likely to experience economic impacts as a result of the associated restrictions of Alert Levels 3 and 4. Many of the wage subsidy schemes were designed to provide support during Alert Levels 3 and 4 only, and as such, when alert levels changed, these schemes ended.

On 2 December 2021, following a change to the COVID-19 Protection Framework, otherwise known as the Traffic Light System, the Wage Subsidy August 2021 Scheme remained available until 9 December 2021.

From December 2021, the COVID-19 Protection Framework was implemented and access to most Wage Subsidy Schemes was phased out.

Some of the COVID-19 Economic Supports have been ongoing throughout the pandemic regardless of Alert Levels or Traffic Lights, such as LSS and STAP. These provide support to people who need to self-isolate after they had contracted COVID-19, were a close contact of someone with COVID-19 or if they were awaiting an outcome of a COVID-19 test.

Within the Ministry's website, you can find information about the purpose of each scheme, including eligibility criteria and differences between schemes. Information about WS, WSE, RWS, WS March 2021 and WS August 2021, can be found here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/newsroom/2020/covid-19/covid-19-wage-subsidy-employer-search.html.

The LSS is an ongoing scheme, and information is available on the Work and Income website. Any employer can access these payments provided they meet the eligibility criteria for each scheme. Information about LSS can be found here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/covid-19/leave-support-scheme/index.html.

You have asked about support for families. In addition to the above, the Ministry's fact sheets contain helpful information, for example Child Wellbeing, Improving employment and outcomes, funding to the Community Sector and more. Fact sheets relating to these particular enquiries can be found within the Ministry's website here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/newsroom/budget/2020/index.html and www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/newsroom/budget/2021/factsheets/index.html#work.

With regard to your enquiry about the categories of costs, for example overseas borrowing and printing cash, this is not, unfortunately, a matter for which we can provide information. Treasury may be able to provide a response to you, should you be interested in this specific information. I would suggest that you write to Treasury directly, if you wish to receive this information, at: information@treasury.govt.nz.

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 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, 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

Bridget Saunders

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