



13 January 2022

Tēnā koe

On 25 November 2021, you emailed Oranga Tamariki requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *The total amount spent by the Ministry of Social Development/Oranga Tamariki on drug testing for 2019/2020?*
- *If possible, can we have the data on how much was spent on drug testing staff and how much was spent on drug testing clients.*

On 1 December 2021, your request was partially transferred to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry), as the information about the Ministry's drug testing costs are not held by Oranga Tamariki.

The Ministry does not drug test staff members or clients. As such, I am refusing your request under section 18(e) of the Act, as the information does not exist, or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

Beneficiaries with work obligations are required to take and pass a drug test where an employer or training provider asks for one as part of the application process for a suitable job.

In most cases a drug test is deemed a recruitment cost for the employer, not prospective employees. The drug testing policy for beneficiaries with work obligations allows the employer to be reimbursed for the test if a person fails, as long as the employer has informed Work and Income at the time of lodging the vacancy that the job requires a pre-employment drug test.

When a client with work obligations fails a drug test or refuses to comply with a drug test, the cost of the drug test is passed onto the client. Work and Income reimburses employers for the costs of the drug test and those costs are recovered as a debt from the client's benefit.

This policy aims to identify clients who are prevented from taking up suitable employment due to drug use or who refuse to apply for drug tested jobs, and to quickly get them back to a position where they can apply for a full range of suitable employment. Beneficiaries diagnosed with a drug dependency will not be sanctioned

under this policy, but they will receive the support they need to address their addiction.

You can find more information about pre-employment drug testing here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/on-a-benefit/pre-employment-drug-testing.html

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, 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



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Magnus O'Neill
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