



7 September 2022

Tēnā koe

On 11 August 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Several of our (SigJaws Trust) clients locally and including right throughout NZ are still vigorously complaining about experiencing very lengthy waiting times via your organizations (i.e. 0800 559 009) Call Centre. (often in excess of 60 minutes). I find this very disappointing as I briefly informed you concerning this ongoing and major problem several months ago. (April, 2022). Prior in lodging this as a formal complaint to a much higher (official domain) would be interested in responses to several below questions. (note no 5 is an Official Information Act Request)*

*1/ what steps have you undertaken to reduce the current lengthy waiting times?*

*2/ have you discussed this very serious and important issue with your senior colleagues? (as believe a specific section in your job description somewhat briefly outlines an aspect of this topic)*

*3/ have you informed the Call Centre personnel to sincerely and genuinely apologies to callers, regarding extended amounts of time in responding to a call?*

*4/ why haven't you implemented an appropriate call back function?*

*5/ as an Official Information Request would like to receive a financial recording of the actual annual cost (obviously too NZ Taxpayers) occurred during the delay of these telephone calls*

On 12 August 2022, you received a reply from Mr Geoff Cook, General Manager Contact Centre and Digital Services, responding to Questions 1 to 4. Your fifth

question was made under the Act, and the Ministry's response addresses your request for:

- *a financial recording of the actual annual cost (obviously to NZ Taxpayers) occurred during the delay of these telephone calls*

The Ministry's Contact Centres currently receive around 125,000 calls per week across all business units. Seasonally high periods can see average weekly volumes rise closer to 150,000 per week.

The Ministry is unable to calculate the exact cost because of increased wait times,<sup>1</sup> but can advise that the Ministry's total telephony spend in relation to calls via the 0800 lines across the range of Ministry services for the last financial year was \$12 million. This cost is the total spend related to the Ministry's 0800 lines, including Work and Income, Seniors, Studylink, and Housing Contact Centres. The cost includes an increase in funding to telephony costs for COVID-19 responses.

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](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

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<sup>1</sup> To the extent applicable, section 18(g)(i) of the Act applies as the Ministry does not hold this information and we have no grounds for believing that it is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organization.

If you are not satisfied with this response for call waiting response times, 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bridget Saunders', written in a cursive style.

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