



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

19 September 2023

Tēnā koe

On 22 August 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *The following media item reports that a number of beneficiaries may have been paid wrongly by MSD.*
- <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/495567/sample-reveals-half-of-beneficiaries-paid-wrongly-by-msd-what-happens-next>
- *Although the article title suggests there would be detail about what MSD proposes to do about this issue, it appears the detail is scant.*
- *I would like to know how many beneficiaries are included in this issue? How many of them have a disability? The proportion of those that are owed support funding versus the proportion that may have been overpaid, if any? And the timetable for the Ministry to rectify the issue?*

The information referred to in RNZ's story of 11 August 2023 was from a baseline study the Ministry carried out for the Te Pae Tawhiti business case preliminary findings. The findings of the study over the entirety of the 12 months are still being finalised and are going through our quality assurance processes with our research team. For this reason, the data in it is not yet final, and some of the details you are seeking are not yet available.

We intend to publish these findings and are working with our research team to determine a date.

It's important to us that clients receive their correct entitlement and the support they need. The findings of the study will inform improvements to processes, practices, and systems in the short term as well as the long term through the Te Pae Tawhiti programme. You can read more about the Te Pae Tawhiti Programme here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/te-pae-tawhiti/index.html

We can tell you that 1432 clients took up our invitation to take part in the study between 18 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, to check if they were getting their full and correct entitlement. The most recent results (as of 30 June) are that 57 per cent of those in the study have been confirmed as receiving their full and correct entitlement. A total of 43 per cent are confirmed as not receiving their full and correct entitlement, i.e. receiving less or more than their entitlement. In these instances, our staff worked to correct these payments accordingly.

The main reason clients in the pilot were not receiving their full and correct entitlement was that MSD didn't have full information about their circumstances for a variety of reasons. This could have been because (but not limited to):

- where they have had conversations with staff, the conversation was not fulsome enough to capture all their circumstances;
- they may have decided not to apply for additional assistance;
- Ministry staff, or the MSD digital platforms they were using to access support, may not have prompted them on additional assistance available;
- clients may not have informed us of changes in their circumstances. e.g., letting us know when their accommodation costs have changed.

Your request for how many of the people in this study have a disability and proportion of those owed funding versus the proportion being overpaid is refused under section 18(f) of the Act as it requires substantial manual collation. To determine this would require staff to review a substantial number of client files. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

The Ministry's Te Pae Tawhiti programme is a multi-year transformation programme. The Ministry aims to improve this issue during the span of this programme with new ways of working, supported by modern technology.

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 regarding full and correct entitlement, 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 read 'Shannon Soughtton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Shannon Soughtton
Group General Manager
Income