



Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

Minute of Decision

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Changes to Hardship Assistance Access Requirements for People in Need

Portfolio Social Development

On 26 June 2019, the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee:

- 1 **noted** that New Zealand's social security system includes hardship assistance for people with insufficient income and assets, and who have immediate and specific needs that cannot be met from their own resources;
- 2 **noted** that the previous government made budgeting activities compulsory for people applying for hardship assistance three times or more within a 12-month period, with limited discretion for case managers to consider whether this requirement should be waived taking into account individual circumstances [CAB Min (10) 7/10];
- 3 **noted** that the Ministry of Social Development has found that few people benefited from this compulsory requirement, and the requirement was a barrier to accessing assistance for people in genuine in need;
- 4 **agree to recommend** that Cabinet rescind the decision referred to in paragraph two above, which makes budgeting activities compulsory for people applying for hardship assistance three times or more within a 12-month period;
- 5 **noted** that this change in operational practice complies with the Social Security Act 2018 and no legislative change is needed to implement these processes;
- 6 **noted** that the Ministry of Social Development will ensure that budgeting activities will be required in circumstances where case managers determine that people would benefit from budgeting advice to better manage their financial situation;
- 7 **noted** that the Ministry of Social Development will continue to work with high hardship assistance users to ensure they are receiving full and correct entitlement and identify and address reasons for hardship;

8 **noted** that this change is consistent with the government's commitment to making the social welfare system fairer and more accessible for all New Zealanders.

Gerrard Carter
Committee Secretary

Present:

Hon Phil Twyford
Hon Chris Hipkins
Hon Andrew Little
Hon Dr David Clark
Hon Nanaia Mahuta
Hon Stuart Nash
Hon Tracey Martin (Chair)
Hon Peeni Henare
Jan Logie, MP

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Office of the Chair
Office of the Deputy Chair
Officials Committee for SWC

Hard-copy distribution:

Minister for Social Development