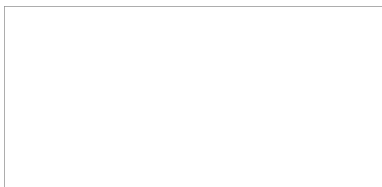




28 SEP 2017



Dear 

On 15 August 2017, the Ministry received from Crown Law your request, under the Official Information Act 1982, for the following information:

- *How many clients had their benefits cancelled for the full 13 weeks in the June quarter in the East Coast?*
- *How many had their benefits cut by half for the full 13 weeks?*
- *What was the mean, median and mode length of sanction over the same period. It may be better to do the figures over a full year to eliminate seasonal effects.*
- *How many clients were issued with a 13 week standdown for leaving a job without 'good and sufficient reason' over the same period?*

As you will be aware, when a person is receiving a benefit from Work and Income, they have certain obligations they must meet, such as letting us know about any changes in circumstances to searching/preparing for work depending on the type of benefit. Information regarding the obligations beneficiaries are required to meet is available on Work and Income's website: www.workandincome.govt.nz/individuals/obligations/index.html.

People who don't meet their obligations may have a sanction imposed. The graduated sanctions regime imposes differing levels of financial sanction depending on how many times a client has failed to meet their obligations in a 12 month period. In order for their benefit to be increased or resumed again a client must undertake a recompliance activity. Generally, this activity is the same or similar to the obligation requirement that initiated the failure. The client's benefit will then be resumed or increased from the date Work and Income are satisfied the recompliance activity has been undertaken.

I am unable to provide you with the number of clients who had their benefit suspended, cancelled or cut by half for 13 weeks or the mean, median and mode length of sanction as information regarding the duration of a sanction is held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would have to manually review the files of all clients who had a sanction imposed. As such I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. 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.

I am able to provide information on the number of graduated, suspension or cancellation sanctions applied to the benefits of working aged clients for the quarter ending June 2017, in the East Coast region.

Table One: Number of graduated sanctions imposed due to an obligation failure for the quarter ending June 2017, in the East Coast region

Quarter ending	Number of graduated sanctions		Total
	Sole Parent Support	Jobseeker Support	
June 2017	202	438	640

Notes:

- This is a count of graduated suspensions, not a count of clients.
- The data contained in the table is for working age clients aged 18 to 64.
- A client may have more than one suspension in the period.
- A graduated suspension is where the benefit payment rate is cut by 50%.

Table Two: Number of suspension or cancellation sanctions imposed due to an obligation failure for the quarter ending June 2017, in the East Coast region

Quarter ending	Number of suspensions or cancellations
June 2017	157

Notes:

- This is a count of cancellations and suspensions, not a count of clients.
- The data contained in the table is for working age clients aged 18 to 64.
- A client may have more than one cancellation / suspension in the period.

Additional statistics about benefit sanctions is available on the Ministry's website at: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/index.html.

A 13 week non-entitlement period is where a client is unable to receive a benefit because they; have voluntarily left their employment without a good and sufficient reason; were dismissed by their employer for misconduct; have failed their obligations for the third time in the last 12 months of continuous benefit receipt (a grade 3 sanction); or have refused an offer of suitable employment (if they have work obligations).

I can advise you that fewer than six clients who applied for a main benefit were subject to a 13 week non-entitlement period for leaving employment without a good and sufficient reason in the quarter ending June 2017, in the East Coast. Please note that a client may undertake an approved recompliance activity and be granted a provisional benefit during the 13 week non-entitlement period.

Information regarding non-entitlement periods of 13 weeks is available on Work and Income's website at the following links:

- www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/students/jobseeker-support-student-hardship/recompliance-13-week-non-entitlement-period-01.htm
- www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/students/jobseeker-support-student-hardship/non-entitlement-period-for-13-weeks.html

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

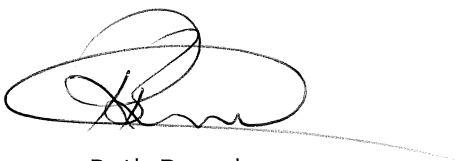
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter available to the wider public shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development'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 concerning benefit sanctions 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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ruth Bound', with a large, stylized loop at the beginning.

Ruth Bound
Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery