



1 AUG 2018



Dear 

On 17 June 2018, the Ministry received your email requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information regarding the rates rebate application process between Work and Income (W&I) and Wairoa District Council (WDC).

As per your conversation with Jamie Mitchell, Assistant Service Centre Manager Wairoa, on 21 June 2018, no information is shared directly between W&I and WDC. A form is filled out by W&I, on behalf of WDC, with benefit income details and given to the client, who then gives this to WDC to support their rates rebate application.

Thank you for raising this with us. It is always helpful to receive feedback as it provides us with an opportunity to improve our services. The Ministry is working with the council to identify how we can better work together for clients wanting to make a rates rebate application.

For clarity, I will address your questions in turn.

- *for how long this process has been undertaken?*
- *clarification of whether or not this is the first time?*

The Rates Rebate Scheme (RRS) was established by the Rates Rebate Act 1973 and is administered by local councils on behalf of the Department of Internal Affairs. The eligibility thresholds were reviewed effective 1 July 2006 to increase eligibility to more households. While it is possible that the process referred to above between W&I and WDC may have been in place since 2006, the earliest point of reference the Ministry can accurately provide you as to when this process has been in place is 2011. The Ministry has also consulted with WDC, which advised that the form was last modified by the council in 2012. The Ministry is unable provide you with the exact date this process was established. In accordance with section 18(g) of the Official Information Act, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, I am unable to provide you with the information you have requested as it is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

- *statistics detailing how often this process of WDC requesting rates information in this manner*
- *and how often WINZ Wairoa has engaged in this practice?*

Every client receiving a benefit or New Zealand Superannuation could potentially apply for a rates rebate with WDC. Therefore, I am unable to provide you with the number of clients who have been given a form for the purposes of receiving a rates rebate from WDC, as this information is held in notes on individual case files.

In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. As such, your request is refused 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.

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 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 with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding the rates rebate application process between Work and Income (W&I) and Wairoa District Council (WDC), 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,



Cassandra Wise
Manager, Issue Resolution, Service Delivery