



17 DEC 2019

Dear [REDACTED]

On 29 October 2019, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *The number of people receiving the benefit broken down into a week by week basis from October 2014 to September 2019 inclusive for the following benefits:*
 - *Jobseeker Support*
 - *Supported Living Payment*
 - *Sole Parent Support*
- *How many of these people in each benefit category had their base benefit deducted by income for those weeks, and the total dollar value of deductions made each week?*

On 22 November 2019 your request was changed to the above information reported on a quarterly basis.

As you may be aware, as part of Budget 2019 announcements abatement thresholds on main benefits will be increased as of 1 April 2020. More information on these changes can be found at this link: www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/newsroom/factsheets/budget/factsheet-abatement-2019.pdf.

Entitlement to, and rate of Jobseeker Support, Supported Living Payment (SLP) and Sole Parent Support (SPS) are affected by the income a person receives. Below is a brief explanation of how income is charged based on each type of benefit.

A client can receive income (including their partner's) up to \$80 gross per week before their Jobseeker Support payment is affected. For single clients receiving income higher than \$80, their benefit is reduced by 70 cents for every \$1.00 of additional income. A client will lose entitlement to Jobseeker Support if their rate of benefit is reduced to zero by the amount of income they receive.

Clients who are married, in a civil union or de facto relationship where both are in receipt of a benefit can receive a combined income of up to \$80 gross per week before their Jobseeker Support payment is affected. Combined income earned that is above \$80 per week reduces each person's benefit by 35 cents for every \$1.00 of additional income.

There are circumstances where a client's income may be charged against their benefit differently, or where clients are exempt from income charge. More information about income charged against Jobseeker Support can be found at this

link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/jobseeker-support/charging-income-01.html

A client (and partner, if any) who is receiving Supported Living Payment and has income charged weekly can receive up to \$100 per week before their income will affect their benefit.

For clients who earn over \$100 per week:

- income between \$100 and \$200 per week reduces the SLP rate by 70 cents for every dollar, and
- income over \$200 per week reduces the SLP rate at 30 cents per every dollar.

The Ministry can report on some Supported Living Payment clients who have income from paid employment charged against their benefit. However, this does not include all SLP clients who are in paid employment.

One reason for this is that clients who are blind and working have their earnings exempt. When this is the case, this information is held on individual client files. Furthermore, clients who are severely disabled may have 100% of their income exempt from being charged against their SLP. This information would also be held on individual client files.

More information regarding income being charged against the SLP can be found at this link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/supported-living-payment/charging-income-01.html

The income abatement calculation for Sole Parent Support matches the above structure of the Supported Living Payment in that a client who is receiving SPS and earns weekly income can receive up to \$100 per week before their income will affect their benefit.

For clients who earn over \$100 per week:

- income between \$100 and \$200 per week reduces the SPS rate by 70 cents for every dollar, and
- income over \$200 per week reduces the SPS rate at 30 cents per every dollar.

More information regarding income being charged against SPS can be found at this link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/sole-parent-support/charging-income-01.html

In addition to these differences, clients in receipt of SLP and SPS can choose to have income charged against their benefit on an annual or weekly basis. More information on annual and weekly income charging for each benefit can be found at the above links.

Please find enclosed the following three tables:

- Table One, shows the number of people in receipt of Job Seeker Support broken down by quarter and income threshold
- Table Two, shows the number of people in receipt of Supported Living Payment broken down by quarter and income threshold

Clients may have their income exempted under certain circumstances (such as severe disablement, as mentioned above) or be subjected to backdated reviews at the end of the 52-week period.

In addition, the total dollar value of deductions will be 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, and manually calculate all deductions. 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.

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

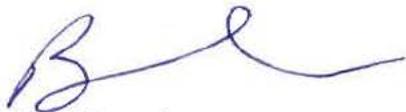
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

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 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 Job Seeker Support, Supported Living Payment, and Sole Parent Support, 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



Bridget Saunders
Manager Issue Resolution Service Delivery

Table Three: The number of people of Sole Parent Support broken down by quarter and income threshold.

Quarter end	Income band							Total
	No income	>\$0 - \$80	>\$80 - \$100	>\$100 - \$180	>\$180 - \$200	>\$200 - \$300	>\$300	
December 2014	57,684	3,429	1,891	3,398	717	3,368	2,047	72,534
March 2015	55,358	3,216	1,714	3,238	737	3,673	2,437	70,373
June 2015	54,564	3,141	1,695	3,230	717	3,570	2,323	69,240
September 2015	53,835	3,006	1,657	3,084	710	3,340	2,255	67,887
December 2015	54,807	3,075	1,680	3,030	651	3,096	2,041	68,380
March 2016	52,662	2,875	1,531	2,976	673	3,288	2,382	66,387
June 2016	51,669	2,828	1,489	2,877	743	3,119	2,697	65,422
September 2016	51,363	2,753	1,427	2,716	711	2,796	2,606	64,372
December 2016	52,555	2,711	1,459	2,634	686	2,480	2,445	64,970
March 2017	49,608	2,494	1,328	2,515	678	2,607	2,983	62,213
June 2017	48,148	2,499	1,334	2,539	661	2,597	2,854	60,632
September 2017	47,234	2,479	1,315	2,477	674	2,457	2,867	59,503
December 2017	49,225	2,527	1,323	2,450	606	2,111	2,437	60,679
March 2018	46,924	2,295	1,225	2,439	661	2,248	3,039	58,831
June 2018	46,710	2,312	1,218	2,393	657	2,232	3,036	58,558
September 2018	46,882	2,181	1,199	2,326	649	2,278	3,105	58,620
December 2018	49,054	2,245	1,231	2,285	600	1,966	2,489	59,870
March 2019	47,159	2,120	1,217	2,249	631	2,174	3,274	58,824
June 2019	47,754	2,115	1,138	2,205	601	2,138	3,312	59,263
September 2019	48,399	1,955	1,076	2,176	580	2,230	3,299	59,715

Table Two: The number of people on Supported Living Payment broken down by quarter and income threshold.

Quarter end	Income band							Total
	No income	>\$0 - \$80	>\$80 - \$100	>\$100 - \$180	>\$180 - \$200	>\$200 - \$300	>\$300	
December 2014	78,744	7,624	1,405	2,624	491	1,597	1,382	93,867
March 2015	78,474	7,545	1,411	2,566	510	1,652	1,422	93,580
June 2015	78,872	7,489	1,392	2,623	510	1,658	1,415	93,959
September 2015	78,835	7,544	1,400	2,590	456	1,620	1,405	93,850
December 2015	79,038	7,547	1,378	2,509	462	1,553	1,361	93,848
March 2016	78,456	7,481	1,366	2,536	445	1,582	1,384	93,250
June 2016	78,517	7,529	1,344	2,430	465	1,536	1,422	93,243
September 2016	78,572	7,521	1,338	2,407	475	1,532	1,412	93,257
December 2016	78,957	7,517	1,317	2,323	468	1,489	1,347	93,418
March 2017	78,707	7,421	1,306	2,300	453	1,543	1,377	93,107
June 2017	78,686	7,358	1,314	2,317	463	1,500	1,353	92,991
September 2017	78,616	7,245	1,309	2,262	454	1,547	1,414	92,847
December 2017	79,075	7,196	1,289	2,237	443	1,452	1,330	93,022
March 2018	78,586	7,091	1,249	2,223	443	1,524	1,357	92,473
June 2018	78,756	7,063	1,276	2,204	411	1,536	1,396	92,642
September 2018	78,608	6,916	1,287	2,178	456	1,513	1,455	92,413
December 2018	79,167	6,871	1,265	2,107	444	1,452	1,381	92,687
March 2019	78,907	6,844	1,250	2,068	461	1,501	1,472	92,503
June 2019	79,232	6,779	1,222	2,161	455	1,482	1,525	92,856
September 2019	79,556	6,666	1,174	2,184	461	1,492	1,530	93,063

Table One: The number of people on Job Seeker Support, broken down by quarter and income threshold.

Quarter end	Income band							Total
	No income	>\$0 - \$80	>\$80 - \$100	>\$100 - \$180	>\$180 - \$200	>\$200 - \$300	>\$300	
December 2014	106,852	5,781	1,546	4,227	771	3,486	1,968	124,631
March 2015	99,526	5,222	1,444	4,140	778	3,650	2,133	116,893
June 2015	100,784	5,307	1,461	4,140	726	3,551	2,103	118,072
September 2015	103,747	5,376	1,372	3,949	765	3,592	2,100	120,901
December 2015	106,472	5,308	1,404	3,847	674	3,273	1,949	122,927
March 2016	100,755	4,970	1,325	3,825	720	3,427	2,112	117,134
June 2016	101,346	4,801	1,322	3,796	845	3,440	2,404	117,954
September 2016	106,146	4,921	1,303	3,629	833	3,175	2,277	122,284
December 2016	108,575	5,051	1,318	3,506	781	2,977	2,103	124,311
March 2017	103,925	4,739	1,287	3,351	767	3,026	2,310	119,405
June 2017	103,638	4,602	1,214	3,504	755	2,921	2,142	118,776
September 2017	105,652	4,496	1,190	3,372	760	2,938	2,318	120,726
December 2017	108,714	4,609	1,197	3,196	704	2,632	1,989	123,041
March 2018	104,598	4,261	1,149	3,094	725	2,752	2,176	118,755
June 2018	108,151	4,307	1,190	3,165	718	2,836	2,146	122,513
September 2018	114,728	4,298	1,230	3,299	745	2,978	2,365	129,643
December 2018	120,010	4,449	1,179	3,048	674	2,603	2,085	134,048
March 2019	117,293	4,188	1,158	3,106	689	2,894	2,392	131,720
June 2019	121,772	4,032	1,062	3,182	697	2,916	2,572	136,233
September 2019	128,510	3,934	1,107	3,258	674	2,848	2,600	142,931