



Dear [REDACTED]

On 2 June 2019, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information about the top 30 cases of welfare fraud.

Overpayments may be established as a result of a benefit fraud investigation and data matching. At the same time, National Fraud Teams and the Integrity Intervention Centre are increasing their focus on fraud prevention and early intervention activities. For example, fraud investigators are working more closely with front line staff to assist them to have conversations with clients to ensure they understand their obligations to Work and Income, including communicating early about their changing circumstances as this could affect their benefit entitlement.

As at June 2019, the Ministry had 291,969 clients in receipt of a main benefit. Each year the Ministry receives around seven million calls to its contact centres, and performs nearly two million face to face client interactions at front line offices. Benefit fraud represents a very small percentage of the overall numbers.

The names of identifying details of some individuals are withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

The following table shows the names of individuals in the top 30 highest value cases of welfare fraud in the 2014 to 2018 financial years where the cases have been publicly reported on.

Name
Diane May Pihama
Jasmine Kasiana Teowai Hudson
Nabjeet Singh
Ruth Pitovao Pomate
Carol Lyne Arani
David Earle Harnett
Mavis Lesaisaea
Angela Menette Fenemor

Note that this is a list of successfully completed prosecutions. There may be overpayments of a higher amount than those listed which did not result in prosecution and those prosecuted with the largest debt may not be prosecuted for that amount.

This list is based on the overpayment total which is the sum of Overpayments, Inland Revenue Aimos Overpayments, Income Related Rent Overpayments and Relationship Debt Sharing overpayments.

For your information you can request access to the sentencing notes through providing the above detail to the courts. Please note that information held by the court is not subject to the Official Information Act. Information about how to request information from the court here: www.justice.govt.nz/about/news-and-media/media-centre/media-information/media-guide/access-to-court-information/.

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, 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



George Van Ooyen
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