



30 OCT 2020

Tēnā koe

On 5 October 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *A table containing the number and value of advances and special needs grants for dental treatment since 1 July 2018, broken down by whether recoverable, ethnicity, gender, and financial year.*
- *The total recoverable amount outstanding for advances and special needs grants for dental treatment.*

The Ministry provides recoverable and non-recoverable financial assistance to people to meet an immediate need for essential items such as food, health costs (including medical and dental costs), power and other costs. These payments are available to any person so long as they meet the income and asset test, and they are unable to meet the cost from any other source.

The Ministry recognises that individuals who are in receipt of a benefit may not be able to budget for unexpected dental costs, and support is available for those who meet the criteria to help with the cost of dental work.

The maximum amount payable to a person applying for a non-recoverable Special Needs Grant towards the cost of dental treatment is \$300 within any 52 week period. Where exceptional circumstances apply, this amount may be exceeded, or more than one payment may be made. In situations where there are no exceptional circumstances, or where individuals do not meet the qualifying criteria for a Special Needs Grant, they may qualify for an Advance Payment of Benefit to meet any or all remaining costs.

Repayment arrangements for recoverable assistance are agreed at the outset, taking a client's individual circumstances and financial situation into account.

All dental treatments funded through the Ministry must be provided by a health agency or registered dental practitioner. Examples of a qualifying dental situation include, but are not limited to, root treatment, tooth extraction, tooth restoration and treatment of acute infection.

Please find the following tables enclosed in Appendix A:

- **Table One:** The number of hardship grants for emergency dental care for the period 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2020, broken down by financial year, recoverable indicator, and ethnicity.
- **Table Two:** The number of hardship grants for emergency dental care for the period 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2020, broken down by financial year, recoverable indicator, and gender.

The Ministry is unable to provide you with the total recoverable amount outstanding, as this information is held in the notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review the files of all those who have received Special Needs Grants or Advances for dental treatment. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the 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 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 about dental grants, 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.

Ngā mihi nui



Bridget Saunders
**Manager, Issue Resolution
Service Delivery**

Appendix One

Table One: The number of hardship grants for emergency dental care for the period 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2020, broken down by financial year, recoverable indicator, and ethnicity

Financial year	Ethnicity	Recoverable (Yes/No)					
		Yes			No		
		Number of grants	Amount granted	Number of grants	Amount granted	Number of grants	Amount granted
1 July 2018 – 30 June 2019	Māori	11,553	\$7,623,152.26	14,147	\$3,937,250.70		
	Pacific Peoples	2,782	\$1,756,403.03	3,507	\$967,430.42		
	NZ European	13,457	\$7,786,165.00	16,830	\$4,579,289.52		
	Other	5,804	\$3,313,433.80	7,987	\$2,207,669.44		
	Unspecified	948	\$573,082.37	1,442	\$402,310.68		
	Total	34,544	\$21,052,236.46	43,913	\$12,093,950.76		
1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020	Māori	11,962	\$8,473,270.81	14,173	\$3,949,768.86		
	Pacific Peoples	3,094	\$2,116,360.38	3,744	\$1,035,766.42		
	NZ European	13,808	\$8,482,310.88	16,534	\$4,503,206.88		
	Other	5,792	\$3,606,723.60	7,729	\$2,134,885.15		
	Unspecified	1,057	\$686,418.22	1,540	\$429,505.46		
	Total	35,713	\$23,365,083.89	43,720	\$12,053,132.77		

Table Two: The number of hardship grants for emergency dental care for the period 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2020, broken down by financial year, recoverable indicator, and gender

Financial year	Gender	Recoverable (Yes/No)			
		Yes		No	
		Number of grants	Amount granted	Number of grants	Amount granted
1 July 2018 – 30 June 2019	Gender Diverse	0	\$0	0	\$0
	Female	21,408	\$13,291,667.07	27,079	\$7,505,688.93
	Male	13,136	\$7,760,569.39	16,834	\$4,588,261.83
	Total	34,544	\$21,052,236.46	43,913	\$12,093,950.76
1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020	Gender Diverse	7	\$12,912.84	13	\$3,060.00
	Female	22,060	\$14,736,035.72	26,948	\$7,462,246.64
	Male	13,646	\$8,616,135.33	16,759	\$4,587,826.13
	Total	35,713	\$23,365,083.89	43,720	\$12,053,132.77

Notes for both tables:

- This is a count of grants and not a count of clients. A client may have more than one grant in a period.
- This data includes Special Needs Grants and Advance Payments of Benefit.
- Amount granted is not necessarily the amount spent.
- Please note the ethnicity classification that is used to construct this table does not necessarily align with the current Statistics New Zealand classification of ethnicity.
- Ethnicity details recorded by the Ministry have been gathered under a variety of classification methods as clients come into contact with the Ministry. The ethnicity data may be self-identified based on an individual's preference or self-construct. While the Ministry collects multiple ethnicities from clients, we only report a unique form of 'identified' ethnicity for core benefit data (one ethnic group per person with Māori coming first, Pacific groups second followed by other groups ending with NZ European).
- From 2 December 2019, updated forms and online applications include three gender options for clients to choose from: Male, Female and Gender Diverse.