



19 MAR 2021

On 23 February 2021, you contacted the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) via Facebook requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *All the service centres' local telephone numbers as well as the service centre managers' numbers.*

Work and Income provides employment services and income support throughout New Zealand. They offer a single point of contact for New Zealanders needing work-search support, income support and in-work support. They also assess people's need for social housing.

When contacting the Ministry, the first port of call is a contact centre, service centre, or (depending on the issue) a dedicated email address. These points of contact provide a triage function ensuring that queries are directed to the team with the knowledge and ability to answer that specific query or provide assistance. It also means that simple queries that do not require specific privileges or powers of direction are remedied as soon as possible. Where a query or issue is more complex or serious, the first point of contact will escalate along the appropriate escalation chain.

Each link in this chain has privileges and abilities specific to their role and level. For instance, an experienced Customer Service Representative (CSR) or Case Manager in one area of the Ministry will have knowledge and abilities that a CSR experienced in another area will not. Where contact is made to a person or area of the Ministry that is unable, or not best placed, to answer a query, the query is forwarded to the appropriate person or area for response.

If you wish to speak to your case manager, you can contact the Ministry by phone for free on 0800 559 009. Alternatively, you can use MyMSD to get in touch: https://my.ms.govt.nz/?utm_source=w%261_website&utm_medium=link&utm_campaign=contact.

A list of all publicly available phone numbers of the Ministry can be found here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/contact-us/phone-numbers.html.

If you would like to make a complaint about the service you have received, more information is available here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/complaints/index.html.

I have made enquiries and am advised that service centres do not have dedicated lines for people to call in to. Extensions are assigned to individuals, apart from one line for each service centre that is intended to be used for emergencies or escalations only. Providing these phone numbers to the public will likely result in a high and constant volume of calls from members of the public to these lines. This would impede the use of these telephone lines for their designated purpose and eventually makes these lines unusable. Therefore, I am refusing this part of your request under section 9(2)(c) of the Act as the release of this information may cause prejudice to measures protecting the health or safety of officials, clients, and members of the public.

In addition, your request for this information is also refused under section 9(2)(g)(ii) of the Act to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the protection of employees from improper pressure. Each day, Ministry staff have thousands of phone calls with clients all over New Zealand. These calls are made via designated telephone lines of individual case managers to ensure that clients speak to the right person in every instance. Releasing service centre phone numbers would lead to a high volume of calls to these lines at any given time from members of the public. Service centre staff picking up these calls would have to redirect these calls to the right staff member, which would cause significant additional workload that could be avoided if clients get in touch with the Ministry's central points of contact or their case manager.

Your request for service centre managers' phone numbers is refused under section 9(2)(g)(ii) of the Act for the same reason as above. Service centre managers are not best placed to respond to incoming calls from clients of this service centre (or other members of the public) as case managers are responsible for interacting with clients in the first instance. If service centre managers had to respond to general inquiries from members of the public, the volume of calls to their lines would increase significantly, which would impede them from effectively managing their responsibilities.

Your request for service centre managers' phone numbers, especially their mobile phone numbers, is also refused under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of service centre managers as natural persons. The need to protect the privacy of these staff members outweighs any public interest in this 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
- 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 service centre and service centre managers' phone numbers, 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 'Bridget Saunders', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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