



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

24 MAR 2021

On 1 February 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

1. *I request the number of requests received by Work and Income for financial assistance for school uniforms and stationery each month since 2014.*
 - a) *The number of requests approved, and the number of requests denied each month.*
 - b) *The average value of the loans approved.*
2. *I request all reports, briefings, aide-memoire, etc, provided to the Minister for Social Development relating to financial assistance for school uniforms and stationery since 26th October 2017.*

On 2 March 2021, the timeframe of your request was extended to 25 March 2021 in accordance with section 15(1) and 15(A) of the Act. This extension was to allow the time for consultations necessary to make a decision on the request to be undertaken.

A client requiring assistance for school uniforms and stationery may be eligible to receive a Recoverable Assistance Payment (RAP) or an Advance Payment of their benefit (an Advance).

RAPs are non-taxable, interest free, recoverable financial assistance to meet essential and immediate needs to non-beneficiaries for specific items or services. If a client meets all qualifications, including meeting an income and asset test and having an immediate and essential need, a RAP can be made to assist with the cost of essential school stationery, generally up to \$200 per child. A RAP can also be made to purchase school uniforms, generally up to \$300 per child.

All clients receiving a main benefit have access to an Advance of up to six weeks of their net benefit entitlement. If a client meets all qualifications, including meeting an income and asset test and having an immediate an essential need, an Advance can be made to assist with generally up to \$200 of school stationery costs and \$300 of school uniform costs.

Please note that all of these grants are recoverable. The arrangement for the repayment of these grants depends on the individual's circumstances. The Ministry works with clients to determine repayment amounts with a view to not place individuals and families in further hardship.

Please find the following tables at **Appendix One** that relate to the first part of your request for specific data on the number of requests approved and declined and average value of grants approved each month:

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Table One: School Uniform and Stationery Hardship Grants that were granted between January 2014 and the end of December 2020, broken down by payment applied for, month granted, average amount granted, and number of grants.

Table Two: School Uniform and Stationery Hardship Grants that were declined between January 2014 and the end of December 2020, broken down by payment applied for, month declined, and number of declines.

More information about grants for school uniform and stationary, including the eligibility criteria, can be found on the Work and Income website at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/children/school-uniforms-and-stationery.html#null.

In terms of the second part of your request, the Ministry has undertaken a search for all reports, briefings and aide-memoire provided to the Minister for Social Development and Employment relating to financial assistance for school uniforms and stationery since 26 October 2017. No documents were located which specifically relate to financial assistance for school uniforms and stationery. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, that the documents alleged to contain the information requested does not exist, or despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

Please note that in addition to financial support in relation to school uniforms and stationary costs, the Ministry provides a recoverable grant for School Costs. This grant relates to funding for costs such as school donations, computing equipment, attendance dues, and school camps and trips. More information on the School Costs grant can be found on the Work and Income website at the following links:

- www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/children/school-costs.html.
- www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/recoverable-assistance-payment-grant.html#null.
- www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/advance-payment-of-benefit.html.

You may also be interested to know that there is a School and Year Start-up Payment available to those receiving an Orphan's Benefit or Unsupported Child's Benefit. More information about this payment can be found online at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/school-and-year-start-up-payment.html.

If you would like to make a new Official Information Act request for information relating to school costs, then please contact the Official and Parliamentary Information team at the following email address: OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

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 relating to financial assistance for school uniforms and school stationery, 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**

Appendix One

Table One: School Uniform and Stationery Hardship Grants that were granted between January 2014 and the end of December 2020, broken down by payment applied for, month granted, average amount granted, and number of grants.

Month granted	PAYMENT APPLIED FOR			
	SCHOOL UNIFORMS		SCHOOL STATIONERY	
	Number of Grants	Average Amount Granted	Number of Grants	Average Amount Granted
January 2014	8,880	\$246	3,513	\$106
February 2014	5,268	\$207	3,474	\$95
March 2014	918	\$202	279	\$98
April 2014	558	\$200	93	\$90
May 2014	1,224	\$200	168	\$70
June 2014	753	\$194	117	\$67
July 2014	741	\$192	99	\$73
August 2014	660	\$207	117	\$73
September 2014	438	\$203	66	\$78
October 2014	480	\$199	63	\$74
November 2014	297	\$239	36	\$89
December 2014	204	\$319	24	\$89
January 2015	7,614	\$250	3,057	\$107
February 2015	5,325	\$217	3,396	\$101
March 2015	855	\$210	255	\$104
April 2015	840	\$213	132	\$101
May 2015	936	\$199	162	\$87
June 2015	732	\$209	96	\$83
July 2015	717	\$209	102	\$84

Month granted	PAYMENT APPLIED FOR			
	SCHOOL UNIFORMS		SCHOOL STATIONERY	
	Number of Grants	Average Amount Granted	Number of Grants	Average Amount Granted
August 2015	609	\$211	102	\$78
September 2015	384	\$205	60	\$81
October 2015	519	\$196	48	\$80
November 2015	360	\$219	33	\$111
December 2015	168	\$311	30	\$361
January 2016	6,243	\$264	2,337	\$121
February 2016	5,859	\$226	3,606	\$115
March 2016	786	\$213	276	\$115
April 2016	666	\$224	108	\$111
May 2016	1,200	\$212	201	\$104
June 2016	804	\$216	108	\$103
July 2016	549	\$236	93	\$111
August 2016	822	\$225	135	\$73
September 2016	405	\$228	69	\$144
October 2016	582	\$213	72	\$91
November 2016	369	\$254	39	\$161
December 2016	261	\$313	42	\$180
January 2017	8,325	\$273	3,654	\$120
February 2017	6,342	\$245	4,056	\$121
March 2017	1,164	\$238	471	\$140
April 2017	606	\$237	99	\$120
May 2017	1,449	\$220	288	\$110
June 2017	813	\$221	141	\$92
July 2017	681	\$229	141	\$111

Month granted	PAYMENT APPLIED FOR			
	SCHOOL UNIFORMS		SCHOOL STATIONERY	
	Number of Grants	Average Amount Granted	Number of Grants	Average Amount Granted
August 2017	882	\$228	171	\$104
September 2017	513	\$213	72	\$94
October 2017	570	\$231	81	\$112
November 2017	390	\$248	27	\$134
December 2017	246	\$342	51	\$200
January 2018	8,481	\$281	3,915	\$125
February 2018	5,808	\$247	3,702	\$120
March 2018	1,020	\$236	408	\$152
April 2018	693	\$239	132	\$166
May 2018	1,398	\$234	276	\$131
June 2018	942	\$230	171	\$118
July 2018	765	\$248	177	\$164
August 2018	807	\$247	177	\$137
September 2018	429	\$259	78	\$121
October 2018	573	\$237	75	\$111
November 2018	408	\$292	45	\$155
December 2018	351	\$362	66	\$263
January 2019	15,705	\$301	8,739	\$138
February 2019	8,247	\$258	6,477	\$140
March 2019	1,554	\$243	705	\$188
April 2019	1,377	\$246	291	\$154
May 2019	1,863	\$243	432	\$190
June 2019	1,212	\$241	261	\$145
July 2019	1,359	\$250	327	\$154

Month granted	PAYMENT APPLIED FOR			
	SCHOOL UNIFORMS		SCHOOL STATIONERY	
	Number of Grants	Average Amount Granted	Number of Grants	Average Amount Granted
August 2019	1,275	\$254	312	\$176
September 2019	783	\$243	177	\$149
October 2019	1,008	\$231	153	\$122
November 2019	627	\$267	81	\$183
December 2019	336	\$349	87	\$286
January 2020	15,525	\$314	7,605	\$156
February 2020	7,947	\$272	5,706	\$146
March 2020	1,113	\$257	477	\$192
April 2020	15	\$252	123	\$387
May 2020	1,719	\$256	321	\$223
June 2020	1,677	\$263	291	\$200
July 2020	1,335	\$263	279	\$161
August 2020	987	\$255	204	\$181
September 2020	846	\$256	144	\$193
October 2020	993	\$236	162	\$158
November 2020	657	\$258	105	\$215
December 2020	411	\$369	90	\$234

Notes for Table One:

- Number of grants is the sum of Advances on Benefit (ADV) and Recoverable Assistance Payments (RAP).
- ADV is a recoverable payment available to people receiving a main benefit (e.g., Jobseeker Support, Sole Parent Support, Supported Living Payment) who require assistance to meet a particular immediate need for an essential item, such as a tenancy bond. Clients accessing this type of assistance can receive an advance of up to six weeks of their net benefit entitlement
- RAP provides non-taxable, interest-free, recoverable financial assistance to non-beneficiaries to meet an essential immediate need for specific items or services, such as a tenancy bond. It is only available to people who meet an income and asset test and is paid up to a maximum amount of six weeks of the rate of the Supported Living Payment

- Amounts are provided to the nearest whole dollar
- This is a count of grants, and not a count of clients
- A client may have received more than one grant in any time period
- This is the amount granted, and not the amount spent
- In certain circumstances low numbers may potentially lead to individuals being identified. To protect confidentiality the Ministry of Social Development uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data. Therefore, this data table has had random rounding to base three applied to all cell counts in the table.
- A value of one or two may be rounded to zero or three.
- The impact of applying random rounding is that columns and rows may not add exactly to the given column or row totals.
- The published counts will never differ by more than two counts.

Table Two: School Uniform and Stationery Hardship Grants that were declined between January 2014 and the end of December 2020, broken down by payment applied for, month declined, and number of declines.

Month declined	PAYMENT APPLIED FOR	
	SCHOOL UNIFORMS	SCHOOL STATIONERY
	Number of Declines	Number of Declines
January 2014	195	51
February 2014	75	54
March 2014	27	6
April 2014	18	3
May 2014	42	0
June 2014	21	0
July 2014	24	0
August 2014	18	3
September 2014	6	0
October 2014	18	0
November 2014	24	0
December 2014	18	3

Month declined	PAYMENT APPLIED FOR	
	SCHOOL UNIFORMS	SCHOOL STATIONERY
	Number of Declines	Number of Declines
January 2015	204	54
February 2015	72	36
March 2015	39	6
April 2015	27	6
May 2015	21	3
June 2015	18	3
July 2015	18	6
August 2015	15	0
September 2015	18	0
October 2015	15	0
November 2015	15	3
December 2015	9	3
January 2016	111	33
February 2016	75	30
March 2016	15	6
April 2016	15	0
May 2016	24	3
June 2016	18	0
July 2016	9	3
August 2016	12	3
September 2016	9	0
October 2016	9	3
November 2016	18	3
December 2016	9	0

Month declined	PAYMENT APPLIED FOR	
	SCHOOL UNIFORMS	SCHOOL STATIONERY
	Number of Declines	Number of Declines
January 2017	117	45
February 2017	60	45
March 2017	27	12
April 2017	12	0
May 2017	24	0
June 2017	12	0
July 2017	6	0
August 2017	18	3
September 2017	15	3
October 2017	18	0
November 2017	12	3
December 2017	15	3
January 2018	99	39
February 2018	57	30
March 2018	15	6
April 2018	15	3
May 2018	24	3
June 2018	9	3
July 2018	15	3
August 2018	15	3
September 2018	12	3
October 2018	18	3
November 2018	15	0
December 2018	9	3

Month declined	PAYMENT APPLIED FOR	
	SCHOOL UNIFORMS	SCHOOL STATIONERY
	Number of Declines	Number of Declines
January 2019	117	48
February 2019	66	54
March 2019	30	9
April 2019	21	18
May 2019	21	9
June 2019	12	6
July 2019	18	3
August 2019	21	9
September 2019	12	3
October 2019	27	6
November 2019	24	12
December 2019	21	6
January 2020	192	93
February 2020	84	69
March 2020	27	27
April 2020	0	66
May 2020	63	33
June 2020	42	18
July 2020	30	18
August 2020	39	21
September 2020	48	21
October 2020	51	21
November 2020	54	36
December 2020	69	51

Notes for Table Two:

- This is a count of declines, and not a count of clients.
- A client could be declined more than once in any time period; the same client may have also been granted a payment in the time period.
- In certain circumstances low numbers may potentially lead to individuals being identified. To protect confidentiality the Ministry of Social Development uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data. Therefore, this data table has had random rounding to base three applied to all cell counts in the table.
- A value of one or two may be rounded to zero or three.
- The impact of applying random rounding is that columns and rows may not add exactly to the given column or row totals.
- The published counts will never differ by more than two counts.
- If a client does not meet the eligibility criteria for these payments, then their application may be declined. The eligibility criteria can be found on the Work and Income website at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/children/school-uniforms-and-stationery.html#null.