



12 July 2022

Tēnā koe

On 14 June 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *How many and how much in dental grants have been paid in Whanganui for the last five years?*

On 17 June 2022, you clarified your request to define Whanganui as the Whanganui TLA.

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 **Table One** in **Appendix A**, which details the number of hardship grants for Emergency Dental Treatment for Whanganui District Territorial Local Authority (TLA) during the period 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2021, broken down by hardship type and calendar year.

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'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.

Ngā mihi nui

Bridget Saunders

Bridget Saunders
Manager Issue Resolution
Service Delivery



Appendix A

Table One: The number of hardship grants for Emergency Dental Treatment for Whanganui District Territorial Local Authority during the period 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2021, broken down by hardship type and calendar year.

Hardship Type	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Grants	Amount Granted								
Special Needs Grant	615	\$167,586.62	639	\$182,755.03	666	\$183,723.36	675	\$185,182.60	723	\$196,455.29
Advance	441	\$190,991.03	456	\$228,623.68	516	\$308,385.71	573	\$360,459.22	654	\$460,006.87
Total	1,056	\$358,577.65	1,095	\$411,378.71	1,182	\$492,109.07	1,245	\$545,641.82	1,377	\$656,462.16

Notes for Table One:

- Grants are not the same as individuals. An individual may have more than one grant within a period.
- Amount Granted may not be the same as the amount spent.
- Territorial Local Authority is based on the clients address as at the date of grant.
- To protect confidentiality the Ministry uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data.
- These data tables have had random rounding to base three applied to all cell counts in the table.
- 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.