



29 March 2022

Tēnā koe

On 1 February 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *How many superannuants have had their pensions suspended since feb 2020 because they went overseas and were unable to secure a spot in MIQ to return?*
- *The dollar amount of how much super has been repaid + is owed because of this?*
- *Advice to the minister on managed isolation and suspending superannuation.*

On 2 March 2022, the Ministry emailed you to let you know more time was needed to respond to your request, and that in accordance with section 15(1) and 15A of the Act, the Ministry's decision would be with you no later than 30 March 2022 due to the consultations necessary to make a decision on the request were as such that a proper response to the request could not reasonably be made within the original time limit.

The Ministry attempted to contact you on 16 February 2022, 22 February 2022, and 2 March 2022 to clarify your request. As you have not responded, your request will be responded to as interpreted by the Ministry.

- For the sake of clarity, I will respond to your questions in turn. *How many superannuants have had their pensions suspended since feb 2020 because they went overseas and were unable to secure a spot in MIQ to return?*

Up until 31 August 2021, all main benefits – including New Zealand Superannuation (NZS) – were extended if the client had left New Zealand before 26 March 2020. From 31 August 2021, extensions to main benefits due to a client being overseas have been considered on a case-by-case basis.

As advised to you by email on 16 February 2022, the Ministry is unable to provide you with information about NZS clients who were unable to return to New Zealand due to being unable to secure a place in Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ). This aspect of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, as Ministry staff would need to manually review thousands of individual case files to determine the number of clients who were unable to return to New Zealand due to MIQ. 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.

However, in the spirit of being helpful, the Ministry is able to provide you data regarding the number of clients who have had their NZS either cancelled or suspended due to leaving New Zealand since 1 April 2020. Please see the following tables in **Appendix A**:

- **Table One**, which shows the number of New Zealand Superannuation (NZS) clients with a suspension or cancellation for the reason 'Left NZ' in the period 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2021, who have had their NZS payments resumed or reinstated as at the end of December 2021.
- **Table Two**, which shows the number of NZS clients with a suspension or cancellation for the reason 'Left NZ' in the period 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2021, who have not had their NZS payments resumed or reinstated as at the end of December 2021.
- **Table Three**, which shows the total number of NZS clients with a suspension or cancellation for the reason 'Left NZ' in the period 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2021.

Please note that a client may have their NZS payments cancelled or suspended due to leaving New Zealand for a variety of reasons, and that this does not necessarily indicate that a client has been unable to return to New Zealand. For example, a client may relocate to a different country permanently, and no longer qualify for NZS.

You will note that **Table One** also shows the number of overseas NZS clients and whether they have Portability. NZS clients who are going overseas for over 26 weeks can apply for General Portability while they are still in New Zealand, which allows these clients to continue receiving their payments while they are out of the country. You can find more information about rates of payment and eligibility for General Portability at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/to-or-from-overseas/portability/general-portability/index.html.

If a client is already overseas and is unable to return to New Zealand within 30 weeks for reasons outside of their control that could not have reasonably

been foreseen before leaving New Zealand, they can apply for General Portability under Section 27 of the New Zealand Superannuation and Retirement Income Act 2001. You can find more information about overseas applications for General Portability at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/to-or-from-overseas/portability/general-portability/applying-for-payment-from-overseas-01.html.

- *The dollar amount of how much super has been repaid + is owed because of this?*

The Ministry is unable to provide you with this information as a client may have multiple suspensions and cancellations that result in debt amounts, and these may occur for various reasons. As advised above, the Ministry does not centrally record whether clients are unable to return to New Zealand due to being unable to enter MIQ.

In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. As such, I refuse your request 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.

- *Advice to the minister on managed isolation and suspending superannuation.*

The Ministry has not provided Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development, with any advice on this subject matter. Therefore, your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this information does not exist.

However, the Minister regularly requests and receives advice on a range of topics. In the interest of transparency, a list of reports received by the Minister from the Ministry is regularly published on the Ministry website. The lists of titles published since September 2018 are available here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/information-releases/reports-to-minister/index.html.

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 regarding New Zealand Superannuation cancellations due to a client being overseas, 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: Number of New Zealand Superannuation (NZS) clients with a suspension or cancellation for the reason 'Left NZ' in the period 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2021, who have had their NZS payments resumed or reinstated as at the end of December 2021

Type of action	Clients currently receiving NZS, which have been resumed or reinstated, as at end of December 2021		
	Clients with Portability	Clients without Portability	Total clients
Suspensions only	1,029	1,476	2,505
Cancellations only	39	21	60
Suspensions and cancellations	18	3	24
Total number of clients with suspensions or cancellations who have had their NZS resumed or reinstated	1,086	1,500	2,589

Table Two: Number of New Zealand Superannuation (NZS) clients with a suspension or cancellation for the reason 'Left NZ' in the period 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2021, who have not had their NZS payments resumed or reinstated as at the end of December 2021

Type of action	Total number of clients not currently receiving NZS as at end of December 2021
Suspensions only	2,148
Cancellations only	627
Suspensions and cancellations	87
Total number of clients with suspensions or cancellations who have not had their NZS resumed or reinstated	2,859

Table Three: Total Number of New Zealand Superannuation (NZS) clients with a suspension or cancellation for the reason 'Left NZ' between 1 April 2020 and 31 December 2021.

Type of action	Total number of current and non-current NZS clients as at end of December 2021
Suspensions only	4,650
Cancellations only	687
Suspensions and cancellations	111
Total number of clients with suspensions or cancellations for reason 'Left NZ'	5,448

Notes for Table One, Two and Three:

- The clients who were suspended and cancelled during the reported period were checked to see whether they are currently receiving NZS as at the end of December 2021. This is what 'Current' refers to in the table whether a client is currently receiving NZS despite previous cancellations or suspensions.
- Clients who are not currently receiving NZS are unable to apply for Portability payments.
- Clients with suspensions can be resumed or cancelled. Similarly, cancelled clients can be re-granted NZS.
- Non-current clients refers to clients who are not currently receiving NZS.
- Suspension refers to when a client's NZS payments are stopped, but not completely cancelled. A suspended NZS can generally be more easily resumed without requiring a new application. If a client's NZS has been cancelled, they may need to complete a new application.
- It is possible for NZS to be cancelled without being first suspended if that is more appropriate depending on the client's circumstances.
- If a client had multiple suspensions and cancellations, then the last action (suspension or cancellation) in the period is taken for the count of clients. If a client is suspended as well as cancelled, then that client is counted in 'Suspensions plus cancellations'.
- 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 a multiple of 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.