



6 September 2022

Tēnā koe

On 23 June 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

For each year since 2000:*

- *How many people asked for a review at the Benefits Review Committee?*
- *How many such complaints were heard?*
- *How many were related to, respectively, entitlements to benefits, NZ Superannuation, supplementary assistance and social housing?*
- *How many were related to obligations to pay maintenance or superannuation?*
- *How many related to the recovery of social welfare debts?*
- *By category as outlined above, how many reviews led to an improved outcome for the person calling for the review?*
- *How many people calling for a review in each of the categories above used an advocate or legal counsel to support them?*

- *How many people appealed to the Social Security Appeal Authority?*
- *Can you provide a spreadsheet outlining the particulars of each appeal?*
- *How many such appeals were heard?*
- *How many were successful?*
- *How many students have asked for a review of their student allowance allocation with a review committee?*
- *How many were successful in improving or receiving their allowance?*
- *How many appealed further to the student allowance appeal authority?*
- *How many were successful in that review?*

On 4 July 2022, the Ministry emailed you to advise that part of your request, namely information relating to Social Security Appeal Authority and student allowance has been transferred to the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) as the information is not held by us but is believed to be held by MOJ.

On 4 July 2022, the Ministry also emailed you to refine your request. On this same day, you responded with a refinement of your request. You clarified the meaning of the term "heard" used in bullet point 2 of your request. You also clarified that you would like the total number of ROD that was related to the recovery of debts broken down by debt type.

On 18 July 2022, the Ministry emailed you to advise you that more time was required to respond to your request, as your request is for a large quantity of information. You were advised that a decision will be with you no later than 26 August 2022, in accordance with section 15(1) and 15A of the Act.

On 26 August 2022, the Ministry emailed you to advise that we have decided to grant your request in part however, it will take some more time to prepare this information for release. It was advised that the information will be sent to you by 9 September 2022.

For the sake of clarity, the Ministry will respond to each part of your request in turn. Some questions have been put together as they are answered by the same tables provided.

- *How many people asked for a review at the Benefits Review Committee?*
- *How many were related to, respectively, entitlements to benefits, NZ Superannuation, supplementary assistance and social housing?*
- *How many were related to obligations to pay maintenance or superannuation?*

Please see the attached Excel Spreadsheet containing **Table One**, which outlines the number of Review of Decisions (ROD) lodged with the Benefit Review Committee from 1 July 2006 to 20 June 2022, broken down by financial year ending June and assistance reviewed.

- *How many such complaints were heard?*
- *By category as outlined above, how many reviews led to an improved outcome for the person calling for the review?*

Please see the attached Excel Spreadsheet containing **Table Two**, which outlines the number of resolved ROD heard by the Benefit Review Committee from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2022, broken down by financial year ending June and committee decision.

- *How many people calling for a review in each of the categories above used an advocate or legal counsel to support them?*

Please see the attached Excel Spreadsheet containing **Table Three**, which outlines the number of resolved ROD heard by the Benefit review committee where an advocate was present from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2022, broken down by financial year ending June.

- *How many related to the recovery of social welfare debts?*

Please see the attached Excel Spreadsheet containing **Table Four**, which outlines the number of ROD lodged where action reviewed relates to Overpayment from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2022.

Please note that prior to 1 July 2006, the reporting of the information you have requested was recorded differently. See the link below showing the information related to number of reviews for the period 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006 on page 134:

www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/corporate/annual-report-2005-2006.pdf

If you would like to see the reports prior to 1 July 2005, let us know and we can provide you with the web links for each document.

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 and attachments 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 information in relation to the Benefits Review Committee, 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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D C Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Diane Anderson
Manager
Client Advocacy and Review