



18 April 2023

Tēnā koe

On 20 March 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

I'm a reporter at the Herald in Auckland writing to request information about claims by MSD clients seeking help with the costs of medical cannabis. Can you please advise:

- 1. The total number of Disability Allowance claims over the past three years by clients seeking help with the cost of medical cannabis.*
- 2. The number of Disability Allowance cannabis claims in question that were accepted.*
- 3. The total dollar value of accepted claims.*
- 4. The average cost per cannabis-related Disability Allowance claim.*

It would be appreciated if this information could be broken down as much as is practicable.

Can I please clarify one aspect of the request.

While I have asked about disability allowance claims covering medical cannabis, I am interested in if there is any other mechanism by which MSD clients can obtain funding for medical cannabis.

Can MSD please interpret the questions to encompass any funding of client costs related to medical cannabis, including but not limited to Disability Allowance.

For example, a monthly breakdown over the past three years of total number of claims for financial assistance with the costs of medical cannabis, plus the monthly number of accepted claims and their total dollar value would be great.

Funding for the additional costs of disability-related medications, once approved, are collated into a single cost category within client files to support payment assessment. Medicinal cannabis is one among a range of medications allocated within this category, as such, data for medicinal cannabis is not retained in a specific category in a way that enables the Ministry to extract the level of detail that you have requested. This also

extends to other financial assistance that may include costs related to medications, including medicinal cannabis, specifically Temporary Additional Support or Special Benefit.

More information about Temporary Additional Support and Special Benefit is available here:

www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/temporary-additional-support/index.html

www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-benefit/index.html

Therefore, I am unable to provide you with this information as it is held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review a substantial number 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.

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



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