



2 February 2023

Tēnā koe

On 15 December 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information about any changes in Disability Allowance provisions particularly in relation to special foods and dietary supplements.

- *So to get more transparency on this, I request under the Official Information Act 1982 all relevant information on this, be this in the form of announcements and instructions by the Minister or Chief Executive/s to Work and Income management and staff (incl. Health Advisors), based on changes in the law, and/or authorised changes in applied processes and/or changes in scientific or other findings, justifying such a change of approach to special foods including dietary supplements.*

The Disability Allowance was introduced from 1 April 1999 and you may find it helpful reading about the implementation in the Ministerial Direction here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/legislation/ministerial-directions/disability-allowance-direction/ministerial-direction-disability-allowance.html.

You can find further legislation as well as the policies and the procedures that Ministry staff follow in determining eligibility for the Disability Allowance, at: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/introduction.html.

Since the introduction of the Disability Allowance, there have been no changes to either the policies or the procedures in determining entitlement.

With regard to allowable costs, you can find the full list, including special foods and vitamins, supplements, herbal remedies and minerals, here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/types-of-costs-01.html.

You can also find further information about special foods and vitamins, supplements, herbal remedies and minerals here:

www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/special-foods-01.html and here:
www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/vitamins-supplements-herbal-remedies-and-minerals-01.html.

If you disagree with any decision made by Work and Income, you do need to pursue your right to apply for a review of decision. The review and appeal process is a legal process that gives clients the opportunity to have the Ministry's decisions reviewed by a number of bodies including the Benefits Review Committee and the Social Security Appeal Authority. These bodies consider whether decisions are made in line with the appropriate legislation. You can find more information about the process at: www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/complaints/review-of-decisions.html.

On 16 December 2022, you further requested, under the Privacy Act 2020, the following information:

- *All information the Ministry of Social Development and Work and Income holds on me, in particular all information generated, received, possibly exchanged and kept in your systems since May 2022, when I made a formal complaint about the treatment received by your staff member (named).*
- *Also included should be all information in relation to the 'Confirming your Circumstances' form, the 'Disability Allowance Application' form and the 'Special Benefit Review' form, handed in on 16, 23 and 30 November 2022. This includes records of any possible internal communications between staff and possibly also management, and with external parties, if such communications were made.*

Your request for personal information is being managed by Jay Basnayake of the Ministry's Auckland Regional Office and you will hear directly from Jay about this matter if you have not already heard from him. Jay is also managing your complaints about the level of service you have received from the Ministry and, as he has been doing, Jay will continue to communicate with you about your complaints.

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 about Disability Allowance changes, 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

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