



13 June 2023

Tēnā koe

On 26 May 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

*Since 1 Dec 2022, on a monthly basis please provide information on :*

- *How many people have claimed less than \$1000 for immediate and essential dental treatment*
- *How many people have claimed between \$1000 to \$1500 for immediate and essential dental treatment.*
- *How many people have claimed between \$1500 to \$2000 for immediate and essential dental treatment.*
- *How many people have claimed between \$2000 to \$2500 for immediate and essential dental treatment.*
- *How many people have claimed greater than \$2500 for immediate and essential dental treatment.*

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 if they meet an 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.

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.

The maximum amount payable to a person applying for a non-recoverable Special Needs Grant (SNG) towards the cost of dental is \$1,000 within any 52-week period, from 1 December 2022. Where exceptional circumstances

apply, this amount may be exceeded, or more than one payment may be made.

Prior to 1 December 2022, the maximum amount payable to a person applying for a non-recoverable Special Needs Grant towards the cost of dental treatment was \$300 within any 52-week period. Where exceptional circumstances applied, this amount may have been exceeded, or more than one payment may have been made.

In situations where there are no exceptional circumstances, or where individuals do not meet the qualifying criteria for a Special Needs Grants, the Ministry may be able to provide other assistance. Beneficiaries may qualify for an Advanced Payment of Benefit (ADV) and non-beneficiaries may qualify for a Recoverable Assistance Payment (RAP).

Further information on dental treatment assistance can be found here: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/health-and-disability/dental-treatment.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/health-and-disability/dental-treatment.html).

Please refer to **Table One** in the attached **Appendix** which shows a list of the number of Special Needs Grants (SNG) and Advance Payment of Benefit (ADV) for Emergency Dental Treatment in the period 1 December 2022 to 30 April 2023 by payment bands.

Please note that **Table One** in the attached **Appendix** does not include data about Recoverable Assistance Payments (RAPs) granted for Emergency Dental Treatment. RAPs granted for Emergency Dental Treatment are recorded as an 'Other' payment in the Ministry's system. This payment category covers a variety of recoverable assistance that can be granted and cannot be broken down by the type of assistance granted.

As such, information about RAPs granted for Emergency Dental Treatment 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 part of 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.

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 regarding Emergency Dental Treatment with us, please feel free to contact [OIA\\_Requests@msd.govt.nz](mailto: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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

*Bridget Saunders*

Bridget Saunders  
**Manager Issue Resolution  
Service Delivery**

## APPENDIX

**Table One: The number of Special Needs Grants (SNG) and Advance Payment of Benefit (ADV) for Emergency Dental Treatment in the period 1 December 2022 to 30 April 2023 broken down by payment band.**

Band	Month				
	December 2022	January 2023	February 2023	March 2023	April 2023
\$0.00 to \$1000	9,522	8,043	8,856	10,914	7,503
>\$1000 to \$1500	345	321	351	465	330
>\$1500 to \$2000	201	219	234	315	189
>\$2000 to \$2500	90	63	102	156	135
\$2500>	129	90	111	162	108
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,287</b>	<b>8,739</b>	<b>9,654</b>	<b>12,012</b>	<b>8,268</b>

### Notes:

- The data is based on number of grants and not number of clients.
- A client may have multiple grants during the reported period.
- This is all SNG and ADV grants for Emergency.
- Emergency Dental grants are paid as Special Needs Grant (SNG), Advance Payment of Benefit (ADV) and Recoverable Assistance Payment (RAP).
- This data includes only SNG and ADV grants.
- RAP payments for Emergency Dental is paid under 'Other' reason, like many others and unable to report on these without manual collation.
- To protect the confidentiality the Ministry of Social Development 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.
- Random rounding does not round down to zero, a value of one or two will be rounded to three.
- 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.