



3 March 2023

Tēnā koe

On 16 January 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

For the year April 2021 to March 2022, what is the total cost for MSD for the Whanganui district. Split between payments made to people with a whanganui post code and the cost appropriated to whanganui if split that way.

On 25 January 2023, the Ministry emailed you seeking to refine your request and you agreed to refine your request to the following lines:

A total cost for MSD for the Whanganui District between 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 (a financial year date-range aligns with standard reporting conventions). Please note that there will be some limitations to the total provided (such as non-regionalised costs that may have a physical presence in Whanganui, ie contact centres, some contractor types etc).

On 13 February 2023, the Ministry emailed you again explaining that more time was needed to respond to your request. The reason for the extension was that consultations necessary to make a decision on your request were such that a proper response to the request could not be reasonably be made within the original time limit. The timeframe to respond to you was extended from 14 February 2023 to 3 March 2023.

To estimate the total cost for the Ministry in the Whanganui District between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022, we have extracted hardship payment expenditure, operational expenditure, Employment and Work Readiness Assistance Programme (EWRA),¹ and benefit related expenditure. Contracted

¹ The purpose of this programme is to assist to operate the benefit system and associated interventions in such a way as to improve client outcomes (employment and social) to move them closer to independence, with a focus on those at risk of long-term benefit receipt, by making provision for the granting of special assistance to or in respect of people who are or may be at risk of long-term benefit receipt.

services was another relevant area of expenditure that was considered toward any total cost. However, this information is not easily reportable at the regional level without requiring substantial manual collation.

The amount for hardship payments granted in the Whanganui District Territorial Local Authority (TLA)² during the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 was \$25,993,056. Please note that the amount of hardship granted may not be the amount spent.

Regarding the operational³ and EWRA related expenditure throughout the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, this was \$6,751,011. The benefit related expenditure (NZ Super related inclusive) was \$403,224,389.⁴

The remaining relevant component of the Ministry's total expenditure within the Whanganui District between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022 is contracted expenditure. Please note that this information is difficult to delineate at the regional level due to numerous contracts having broader Central and Taranaki Region coverage. In order to provide you with this information, the Ministry would need to divert personnel from their core duties and allocate extra time to complete this task. The diversion of these resources would impair the Ministry's ability to continue standard operations and would be an inefficient use of the Ministry's resources. As such, your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, requires substantial collation. 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 requests 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.

² TLA is estimated based on the client's address at the time of the grant.

³ Operational expenditure will not include Managers and Regional personnel costs as they are included in other regional cost centres.

⁴ Please note that all operational, EWRA and benefit related expenditure provided in this response is derived from our Whanganui Region cost centre data.

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 for the total cost for MSD for the Whanganui district, 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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