



10 November 2023

Tēnā koe

On 29 September 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *s63 payments granted by msd workers (if not their names, the offices they operate from)*
- *s64 payment s granted by the minister*
- *those who were and were not already on benefits.*
- *the category of "emergency" grounds substantiating the "emergency" and the total amount.*
- *currently how many people are still in receipt of the emergency payment.*
- *your index does not clarify the new claims and concurrent recipients.*

I would first like to extend my sincere apologies, as the Ministry incorrectly refused your previous request for a breakdown of emergency benefits granted under sections 63 and 64 of the Social Security Act 2018 (SSA).

As a result of this request, the Ministry has identified that the Emergency Benefit (EB) Reason code 'COVID-19 Foreign Nationals' refers to grants made under section 64 of the SSA. All other EB reason codes refer to grants made under section 63 of the SSA.

Please see that attached **Excel spreadsheet** which contains the following information:

- **Table One:** Number of working age Emergency Benefit grants for specific Emergency Benefit reasons during the period 1 January 2020 to 30 September 2023, broken down by Emergency Benefit reason, transfer or new grant, and quarter ending.
- **Table Two:** Number of working age Emergency Benefit grants for specific Emergency Benefit reasons during the period 1 January 2020

to 30 September 2023, broken down by Work and Income Service Centre, transfer or new grant, and quarter ending.

You will note that some information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

I am unable to provide you with the amount paid for each emergency benefit granted and the Ministry staff member who recommended the grant 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.

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.

Please also note that the Minister of Social Development and Employment does not approve benefit grants, as this is an operational matter. The Minister approves the use of section 64 of the SSA generally but does not personally approve benefit grants. Please refer to the Ministry's letter dated 29 September 2023 which provides further information about the approval of section 64 EBs.

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](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding Emergency Benefit grants, 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**