



12 September 2023

Tēnā koe

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

- *How many requests for financial assistance to help with paying electricity bills have been declined this year so far, and within the last calendar year of 2022?*

The Ministry of Social Development, through Work and Income, provides recoverable and non-recoverable financial assistance to help people meet an immediate need for essential items such as food, health costs, power and other costs. These payments are available to any person as long as they meet the income and asset test, and they are unable to meet the cost for an essential need from any other source. Work and Income ensures that people receive their correct entitlement to any other financial assistance as part of the application and assessment process.

Work and Income assists people to manage their costs in the longer term, not just with immediate and urgent assistance. It is important to understand why the client cannot meet these costs in order to provide the most appropriate form of assistance. The applicant also has an obligation to manage their own finances with the help of Work and Income. This may include seeking financial advice from budgeting services.

The Ministry can provide hardship grants to cover outstanding bills or reconnection services, for electricity, gas or water supply. What we can provide will depend on each Energy Supplier and the specific services they offer. For this request, we have only provided you with information relating to hardship grants for electricity assistance.

Please find the attached **Appendix**, containing the number of hardship declines for electricity assistance between 1 January 2022 and 31 July 2023, broken down by month.

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

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding declined electricity assistance, 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 hardship declines for electricity assistance between 1 January 2022 and 31 July 2023, broken down by month:**

<b>Year / Month</b>		<b>Number of Declines</b>
<b>2022</b>	January	123
	February	108
	March	138
	April	87
	May	150
	June	141
	July	201
	August	282
	September	216
	October	180
	November	189
	December	168
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,983</b>
<b>2023</b>	January	138
	February	141
	March	195
	April	120
	May	150
	June	162
	July	204
	<b>Total - as at end of July 2023</b>	<b>1,113</b>

### Notes:

- The number of declines is not the number of individuals. A client can have more than one decline in each time period.
- To protect 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.
- 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.