



19 April 2024

Tēnā koe

### **Official Information Act request**

Thank you for your email of 22 March 2024, requesting information on the Winter Energy Fund Payment. I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision on your request set out below. For the sake of clarity, I will respond to your request in parts.

- 1. A breakdown of the number of people that receive the payment under each recipient category listed below, plus any category not listed below. Plus, the cost of the subsidy per payment for each person and in total for each of the categories below plus the complete total for 2023.*

Please find **Table One and Table Two** below in response to this aspect of your request.

#### **Table One: The number of Winter Energy Payment recipients as at the end of 30 June 2023, broken down by benefit type.**

| <b>Benefit type</b>                | <b>Count</b>   |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Emergency Benefit                  | 4,095          |
| Emergency Maintenance Allowance    | 639            |
| Jobseeker Support                  | 170,832        |
| Jobseeker Support Student Hardship | 210            |
| New Zealand Superannuation         | 578,220        |
| Sole Parent Support                | 74,145         |
| Supported Living Payment           | 90,636         |
| Veteran's Pension                  | 3,660          |
| Young Parent Payment               | 1,296          |
| Youth Payment                      | 1,197          |
| <b>Total</b>                       | <b>924,927</b> |

Notes for Table One:

- This is the number of Winter Energy Payment recipients. This table does not count partners who are included in a benefit.

- 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 has 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.

**Table Two: Winter Energy Payment expenditure for the year ended 31 December 2023, broken down by benefit type.**

| <b>Benefit type</b>                | <b>Expenditure (Millions of \$NZD)</b> |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Emergency Benefit                  | 2.531                                  |
| Jobseeker Support (including EMA)  | 89.219                                 |
| Jobseeker Support Student Hardship | 0.053                                  |
| New Zealand Superannuation         | 332.949                                |
| Sole Parent Support                | 52.716                                 |
| Supported Living Payment           | 45.794                                 |
| Veteran's Pension                  | 2.011                                  |
| Young Parent / Youth Payment       | 1.686                                  |
| <b>Total</b>                       | <b>526.960</b>                         |

Please note that the systems used for finance and for administering benefits are different. As such, for expenditure we are only able to provide Emergency Maintenance Allowance as combined with Jobseeker Support, and Youth Parent Payment combined with the Youth Payment, whereas we can provide these benefit categories separately for the count of recipients. We have provided these figures separately in Table One so as to provide the most complete data possible for you.

2. *Data on the number of people in NZ currently receiving NZ superannuation and separately the veterans pension in terms of total numbers and total cost for 2023.*

Please find **Table Three** below in response to your request for total cost of these two benefits. Please also note that the number of people in NZ receiving these benefits is publicly available on our website here:

<https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/>.

**Table Three: Gross and Net expenditure for New Zealand Superannuation and Veteran's Pension for the year ended 31 December 2023.**

| <b>Benefit type</b>        | <b>Gross Expenditure (Millions of \$NZD)</b> | <b>Net Expenditure (Millions of \$NZD)</b> |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| New Zealand Superannuation | 20,560.175                                   | 17,158.233                                 |
| Veteran's Pension          | 130.949                                      | 111.348                                    |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>20,691.124</b>                            | <b>17,269.581</b>                          |

Please note that as New Zealand Superannuation and Veteran's Pension (NZS/VP) are individual entitlements, a couple is counted as two recipients. However, a couple who are receiving NZS/VP will only receive one Winter Energy Payment between the two people. This means the number of people on NZS/VP who are receiving a Winter Energy Payment will differ from the total number of people receiving NZS/VP.

Please note that while Winter Energy Payments are automatically paid to clients who are getting a main benefit, New Zealand Superannuation or Veteran's Pension and meet all other eligibility criteria, may opt out of the payment. More information about eligibility for Winter Energy Payments can be found on our "MAP" website here: <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/winter-energy-payment/qualifications.html>.

3. *If Treasury or another government department holds information directly or indirectly around the current situation whereby, we have tens of thousands and possible more than 100,000 people currently receiving the winter energy payment without needing it then please provide all information directly or indirectly relating to that, including but not limited to advice to any Government Minister. E.g. people drawing the pension yet also working in fulltime paid employment and/or people drawing the pension but have a large 'nest egg' and do not need that payment on a needs basis.*

The Ministry does not hold information in relating to this aspect of your request. I understand that the Treasury will be responding to this query. I have not transferred this request to them as they have also received this request.

4. *I also request any modelling etc around the spending of this taxpayer money without any needs basis to the spending and the cost involved and the savings that could occur by adopting a means based criteria.*

The Ministry does not hold information in relating to this aspect of your request. As such, this aspect of your request has been refused under section 18(g) of the Act, on the basis that the information is not held by the Ministry, and we have no grounds for believing that the information is held by another department. Following a discussion with the Treasury, I have no reason to believe that any other agencies hold information in response to this part of your request.

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

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 my decision on your request, 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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Magnus O'Neill".

pp.

Magnus O'Neill

**General Manager**

**Ministerial and Executive Services**