



5 August 2024

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 8 July 2024 requesting a breakdown of Winter Energy Payment (WEP) recipients in 2021, 2022 and 2023, and copies of advice on coverage options regarding the inclusion and/or exclusion of students.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision on your request set out below.

For ease of clarity, I have responded to your request in parts, as set out below.

Advice prepared by your department - for this government or the previous government - which discusses coverage options for the winter energy payment.

Advice regarding the inclusion or exclusions of students as a beneficiary group for the Winter Energy Payment.

Please refer to the Families Package Information Release from 2018 which provides advice provided by the Ministry that informed the WEP design decisions in 2017. This information is publicly available and can be found on the Treasury website: www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/information-release/families-package-information-release.

Within this link, the following resources reference students in the context of the WEP:

- *Joint Report T20417/2562: The Winter Energy Payment and incentives to work (p.6)*
- *Joint Report T2017/2495 Families Package: Winter Energy Payment – Detailed Design (p.3)*
- *Joint Report T2017/2415 Families Package: Key design issues (p.17)*
- *Joint Report T2017/2365 Covering Report on Families Package (p.8)*

Further advice was also provided by the Ministry, this culminated in some changes to the WEP legislation in 2018. We are providing you with the *Addressing errors with the Winter Energy Payment legislation* page from the Ministry's publicly available website: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/information-releases/cabinet-papers/2019/addressing-errors-with-the-winter-energy-payment-legislation.html.

Statistics on how many people received the Winter Energy Payment in 2023 and 2022, and 2021.

How many of these people who received the Winter Energy payment in 2023, 2022, and 2021, were also enrolled in full time study.

How many people are currently receiving the Winter Energy payment this year (2024, since 1 May)

How many people who are currently receiving the Winter Energy payment are currently also enrolled in full time study.

Please see the attached **Appendix** which shows the number of WEP recipients as-at the end of the month of June for the years 2021 to 2024, by benefit type.

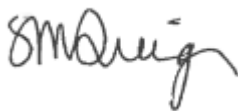
People enrolled in full time study¹ are not eligible for the WEP, therefore this part of your request is refused under 18(e) of the Act as this document does not exist.

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.

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 or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

pp. 

Magnus O'Neill
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services

¹ This excludes periods when a student's ordinary full-time study payments (eg the Student Allowance) cease during a holiday break (for more than three weeks). Under these circumstances, a student may be eligible for the Job Seeker Student Hardship benefit. The Job Seeker Student Hardship benefit is eligible for the WEP.

Appendix

The number of Winter Energy Payment recipients as-at the end of the month of June for the year 2021 to 2024, by benefit type.

Benefit type	as at 30 June			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
New Zealand Superannuation	551184	564345	578223	597105
Veteran's Pension	4278	3969	3660	3456
Emergency Maintenance Allowance	684	627	639	759
Sole Parent Support	65880	72594	74145	76548
Supported Living Payment	84537	87366	90639	92586
Job Seeker Student Hardship	360	210	210	294
Emergency Benefit	4452	4155	4095	4338
Job Seeker	188598	168516	170832	189246
Youth Payment	1449	1332	1194	1578
Young Parent Payment	1398	1281	1293	1347
Total	902820	904395	924927	967251

Notes:

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

People receiving Job Seeker Student Hardship are eligible for the WEP to assist with their living costs during periods when their ordinary full-time study payments (eg the Student Allowance) cease during a holiday break of more than three weeks.

Confidentiality:

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.