



3 October 2024

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 10 September 2024, requesting information about the definition of visual acuity criteria for eligibility for the Supported Living Payment (SLP).

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

Under both the repealed Social Security Act 1964 and the replacement Social Security Act 2018, there is no definition of what qualifies as total blindness. However, both versions of the Social Security Act may require clients to undergo an assessment to qualify for SLP for total blindness. Operational guidance states that the assessment must identify that the client meets one or both of the following criteria:

- the best visual acuity (sharpness), with correcting lenses, does not exceed 3/60 or 1/20 and/or
- state that the visual field is contracted to a maximum of five degrees on either side of the fixation point.

Please note that this criterion has not been removed and is still present in operational guidance at the following link on the Ministry of Social Development's (the Ministry) website, under the subheading, *Medical criteria for blindness*:

www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/supported-living-payment/deciding-entitlement-for-blind-clients-01.html.

The criteria continues to inform the Ministry's operational guidance since it appeared in the New Zealand Transport Agency document you referenced, *2015 RTS 14 Guidelines for facilities for blind and vision impaired pedestrians* (on their website, at www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/tan15-06/).

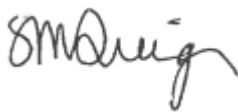
There has also been no change to the requirement of undergoing an assessment to qualify for SLP on the grounds of total blindness under the Social Security Act. Therefore, there are no Ministry of Social Development policy or cabinet papers to provide for this request.

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.

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

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Magnus O'Neill
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services