MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

7 August 2025

Tēnā koe

**Official Information Act request**

Thank you for your emails of 23 June and 3 July 2025 requesting information about funding pathways for prescribed medicinal cannabis treatments.

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

Please find my decision on each part of your request set out below.

***Request 1:***

1. *A full disclosure of all government, departmental, or external funding pathways available to help disabled New Zealanders pay for prescribed medicinal cannabis treatments.*

I am refusing your request under section 18(g)(i) of the Act as the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is either held by or closely connected to the functions of another department, Minister of the Crown or organisation.

However, I can provide you with information about options available through the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) for funding prescribed medicinal cannabis treatments.

Medicinal cannabis can be funded by the Ministry under a Disability Allowance (DA), as a non-subsidised pharmaceutical. You can find eligibility criteria and information about the DA and non-subsidised pharmaceutical costs on the Work and Income Manuals and Procedures (MAP) website here:

- https://workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/index.html
- https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/qualifications.html

- https://workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/non-subsidised-pharmaceuticals-01.html

Non-subsidised pharmaceutical costs may be included in the DA if the disability certificate confirms the treatment is beneficial and of therapeutic value to the client. In addition, the client's usual medical practitioner must verify that the pharmaceutical item is essential, is directly related to the client's disability, and there are no other suitable subsidised or partly-subsidised alternatives.

The medical practitioner will also need to provide their reasons for prescribing the pharmaceutical item and advise whether or not PHARMAC funding has been applied for. They must also outline the reasons why any application for funding was declined or why PHARMAC funding was not sought.

In New Zealand, under Section 29 of the Medicines Act 1981, a medicinal cannabis product must be prescribed by a medical practitioner registered to practice in New Zealand. The Ministry may seek additional information to ensure that the prescribing practice meets these legal requirements.

Clients with excess health and disability costs may also be eligible for Temporary Additional Support if they have low assets and a deficiency in their income. More information about including health and disability costs in Temporary Additional Support can be found here:

- https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/temporary-additional-support/health-and-disability-costs-01.html

2. *The specific names of the departments, units, or external funding sources responsible for supporting patients prescribed high-cost essential medicines not covered under the Pharmaceutical Schedule.*

I am refusing your request under section 18(g)(i) of the Act, as the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is either held by or closely connected to the functions of another department, Minister of the Crown or organisation.

The Ministry does not have a specific "responsibility" to support patients prescribed high-cost essential medicines. However, clients eligible for a DA can apply for financial support to help meet a range of their disability-related costs.

You can find a list to the types of costs that can be covered under DA online here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/types-of-costs-01.html,

3. *Internal memos, correspondence, or policy documents where my name has been mentioned in relation to this matter (under Principle 6 of the Privacy Act 2020).*

This is a Privacy Act request and has been forwarded to the appropriate business unit at the Ministry. You will receive a response to this request from the Ministry in a separate letter.

***Request 2:***

4. *Written confirmation of all existing pathways (Disability Allowance, Special Needs Grant, Temporary Additional Support, Emergency Benefit, Special Disability Allowance) that can be immediately applied to my situation.*

5. *An urgent meeting or named contact person who can fast-track my application before my prescription order lapses.*

Your above requests have been referred to our Service Delivery Team, who will arrange for a staff member to contact you directly to discuss what support you may be eligible for. It is important to note that applications cannot be processed or fast-tracked without the relevant required documentation.

6. *Copies of any internal policy, guidelines, or decisions that have been made to accept or decline such funding for non-Pharmac, medically prescribed treatments.*

The first part of your request has been responded to under question 1.

Your request for information on all the decisions the Ministry has made on applications for non-subsidised pharmaceuticals is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, as substantial manual collation would be required to collate this information.

This information is contained in individual client files, which would require manual review to respond to your request, taking thousands of hours of Ministry staff time. 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.

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

Anna Graham
**General Manager**
**Ministerial and Executive Services**