



2 December 2025

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 6 October 2025, requesting information about the inclusion of step-parent income in Student Allowance assessments, and any previous exemptions.

On 4 November 2025, we transferred part of your request to the Ministry of Education (MoE) as the information was deemed more closely connected with the functions of MoE.

The part of your request that the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) is responding to relates to information about any exemptions or special cases.

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

I refer you to the Student Allowances Regulations (1998) which are publicly available on the New Zealand Legislation website, here: www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/1998/0277/latest/DLM259355.html.

The New Zealand Legislation website defines a parent with respect to a step-parent:

parent, in relation to a student, includes—

(a) a step-parent of that student (other than a specified caregiver of that student); and

(b) a person acting in place of a parent of that student (other than a specified caregiver of that student)

The Regulations do not provide any discretion to explore the financial support (or lack of) provided by that step-parent.

Individual case files may hold scenarios where the declared step-parent has not been included in the parental income assessment but this would be attributable to a range of reasons specific to a clients (and their parents) circumstances. For example, the declarations that were made the by parent, or other information that the Ministry received which led to the conclusion that the parent and the declared step-parent are not in a de facto relationship (as such we would not consider them as a step-parent).

It is important to note that within our legislation, policy or practice, there are no exemptions, discretion or alternative assessment methods when a step-parents financial support is being considered in the context of parental income assessments for Student Allowance. Therefore, your request for this information is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this document does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

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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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anna Graham', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Anna Graham
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services