



19 February 2025

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 22 January 2025, requesting advice around unlocking savings for introducing 26-week reapplications, forecasts for reapplications, and details of administrative costs.

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 separately below.

Question 1: can you please provide all advice around unlocking savings for introducing 26-week reapplications?

The Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) has published the advice on our website here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/information-releases/cabinet-papers/2024/changes-to-welfare-settings-to-support-people-into-employment-and-off-benefit.html.

The supporting Regulatory Impact Statement encompasses all the advice we provided regarding savings for 26-week reapplications, here: www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/regulatory-impact-statements/regulatory-impact-statement-changes-to-welfare-settings-to-support-people-into-employment-and-off-benefit.pdf.

There is no further advice to that already published.

Question 2: In addition, are you able to provide more numbers around how many people are forecast to reapply, compared to the 52 week policy?

The new 26-week reapplication process will apply to all Jobseeker Support recipients, compared to the current 52-week reapplication process which applies to both Jobseeker Support and Sole Parent Support recipients. The 2024 Half-Year Fiscal and Economic update provides further information on forecast changes to the number of people receiving these benefits into coming years, to provide an illustration of how many people may be subject to each policy in future. The update is available on the Ministry's website here:

www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/hyefu/december-2024.html.

To enable the Ministry to manage the new demand this policy change introduces has meant the new 26-week reapplication process is different to the current 52-week process.

For example, if a client currently engages with the Ministry and we have discussed with them their eligibility to the Jobseeker benefit and/or an employment conversation has taken place 6 weeks before the 52-week reapplication is due, the client will need to attend an appointment to cover the eligibility and employment components of the 52-week reapplication.

In the scenario above, the engagement the client had with the Ministry staff member is recognised and would mean the client will still need to complete the online reapplication where they are required to acknowledge they understand their obligations and note their intention to reapply for Jobseeker benefit. If the client does not complete this step, their Jobseeker benefit will stop.

Question 3: Please also provide the rationale and details behind the administrative costs - in terms of a breakdown as to where these have gone - and details as to how much has been spent and also saved thus far on this?

Reapplication for benefit forms part of the wider duties of Ministry frontline staff. There are no full-time equivalent Work and Income staff that are entirely, or predominately processing reapplications. As such, the Ministry is unable to categorise the specific administrative costs of reapplications, from other staff duties. Your request for this information is refused under section 18(g) of the Act as the information you had 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.

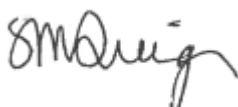
However, the Ministry can provide advice on IT implementation costs. The Ministry has spent \$2.381 million on IT system changes so far (as at the end of January 2025) and is expecting to spend a further \$3.974 million before 1 July 2025.

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. 

Anna Graham
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