



7 July 2025

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 1 May 2025, requesting data about the Special Needs Grant (SNG) for dental treatment.

- *I have a request about access to the \$1000 dental treatment hardship grant from MSD, detailed below for:*
 - *People aged 65 plus across the general population – broken down by ethnicity including Asian people aged 65 plus, Pākeha people aged 65 plus, MELAA people aged 65 plus*
 - *Māori, Pacific, and tāngata whaikaha /disabled people aged 50 plus*

I would like data on how many of these people were:

- *Single*
 - *Couples with or without children*
 - *Sole parent with 1 child*
 - *Sole parent with 2 or more children*
- *I would like access to data on both numbers and percentages of applications granted and applications denied for the following time periods:*
 - *January 2020 to March 2025, with annual reporting in y.e. December 2024 as well as quarterly reporting from January-March 2020 to January-March 2025*
 - *National statistics as well as regional breakdowns if possible*

I apologise for the delay in responding to your request.

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

Please find attached **Appendix One**, which contains an Excel Spreadsheet with two tables providing information you have requested:

Table 1: Number and Dollar amount of Non-Recoverable Special Need Grants (for Emergency Dental Treatment) approved from 1 January 2020 to 31 March 2025

Table 2: Number of Applications (Grants and Declines) for Non-Recoverable Special Need Grants (for Emergency Dental Treatment) from 1 January 2020 to 31 March 2025.

When interpreting the data provided, it is important to note that the maximum amount payable for a SNG for dental treatment over a 52-week period increased from \$300 to \$1000 on 1 December 2022.

Please also note, that assistance is available for dental treatment exceeding \$1000, however this is recoverable and therefore needs to be paid back by the client.

Your request for the number of people aged 50+ with a disability, who received a SNG for dental treatment, and data about applicants' household composition is declined under section 18(f) of the Act, as substantial manual collation would be required to collate this information.

If held, this information would only be contained within individual client files, which would each require manual review to respond to your request. 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.

In addition, your request for the percentage of non-recoverable SNGs for Dental Treatment applications granted and declined is refused under section 18(g) of the Act, as this information is not held by the Ministry. However, please refer to the numbers of declined and approved applications (including totals data), which are provided in Table 2 of Appendix One.

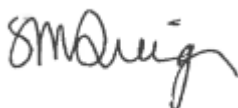
You can find information about how people can access the SNG for dental treatment and other forms of assistance the Ministry can provide to help eligible people access dental care (such as Advance Payments of Benefit and Recoverable Advance Payments) at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/health-and-disability/dental-treatment.html.

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
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services