



24 July 2025

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your emails of 10 and 19 June 2025, requesting information about the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry)'s use of Artificial Intelligence to make determinations about people's benefits.

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

The Ministry does not use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to make decisions about people's benefits. We do sometimes use simple rules-based mechanisms to facilitate some parts of the benefit system through automated decision-making (ADM), but these do not involve AI systems.

As an example, ADM will be used to automatically regrant benefits in some situations, when the system can confirm that the client has met all requirements of the reapplication process. Decisions to grant a benefit are always made by a Ministry employee.

We have used the below OECD definition of an AI system as the basis for this response, in line with recent public sector guidance.¹

"An AI system is a machine-based system that, for explicit or implicit objectives, infers, from the input it receives, how to generate outputs such as predictions, content, recommendations, or decisions that can influence physical or virtual environments. Different AI systems vary in their levels of autonomy and adaptiveness after deployment."

More information about AI in the public sector, including the definitions we use, is available here:

www.digital.govt.nz/standards-and-guidance/technology-and-architecture/artificial-intelligence

¹ Previous media responses referred to broader definitions of Artificial intelligence where some tools used in ADM processes could be considered to be AI. The Ministry's current ADM use does not include generative AI.

More information about the use of ADM, and the safeguards we have in place, is available here:

www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/automated-decision-making/index.html

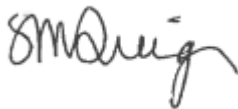
www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/automated-decision-making/jobseeker-support-reapplication.html

I hope this information is helpful context for you. If you wish to discuss this response with us, or if after reviewing the above links there is any further, specific information you are seeking on this topic, please feel free to get back in touch and make a further request, by contacting OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

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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