



6 March 2025

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 5 February 2025, requesting information about Internal communications regarding the online Manuals and Procedures (MAP) update published 31 Jan 2025 about Health Practitioner information.

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: copies of all internal communications within MSD regarding the Manuals and Procedures update regarding "Health Practitioner Information" published 31 January 2025.

To address this question, I provide a summary under section 16(1)(e) of the Act.

The health practitioner work update published on 31 January 2025 was a routine update of published information on the MAP part of the Ministry's website. The purpose was to fix incorrect and inconsistent information in MAP (including centralising the definitions of health practitioner, nurse practitioner and medical practitioner, and making it clearer which health practitioners can complete medical certificates for the different assistance the Ministry offers).

The Ministry regularly does minor improvements as it is important that our guidance is consistent and unified to make it easier for staff to understand and ensure clients have more consistent outcomes. For the Health practitioner work published on 31 January 2025, there were no policy or legislative changes that lead to this MAP update. The update arose from a request from the Ministry's Principal Health Advisor. It is part of wider 'best practice' Ministry work being completed for health practitioners and their role, ensuring consistency across our communication platforms and to ensure the information provided is correct.

The update was part of the general work the Ministry does to keep MAP and our guidance up to date for staff and clients. This update went through the Ministry's standard internal drafting and review process. This process includes extensive drafting within the Operational Policy team (including peer reviews to ensure the pages align with other MAP content) before the MAP pages that need changing are sent to wider Ministry teams for review to ensure information is correct and consistent. For this update, there was a plain English review, Helpline staff

provided a frontline and process review, and the Ministry's Principal Health Advisor and Principal Disability Advisor provided an expert health review.

Once the feedback rounds (of which there are generally 2-3) are complete and feedback has been incorporated, the MAP pages are signed out, first by the Manager of the Digital Communications team and then by an Operational Policy Principal Advisor.

Due to the wide use of Health Practitioners advice across a range of other guidance on MAP, this change included many different pages and as a result, there were numerous emails enclosing iterative track change drafts of the manuals in question. Due to some of the MAP manuals changing in relation to main benefits (whose manuals are 400-500 pages long) the quantum of material is extensive, and essentially administrative and repetitive in nature.

Question 2: I also request any internal communications within MSD specifically regarding the practice of referring to a social security benefit as a "product", as demonstrated in the description of this update in the "What's New" section of MSD's online Manuals and Procedures.

To answer this question, I provide a summary under section 16(1)(e) of the Act to clarify the use of "product" (from the main author of the Health Practitioner Information):

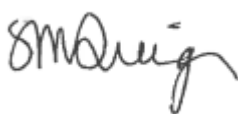
The use of the word 'product' in the 'what's new' text "Who can complete the medical certificate and/or assessment depends on the product the person is applying for." is to be read in the context of the wider sentence and following bullet list where the main benefits impacted were listed alongside a range of extra help that the Ministry offers. The use of product in this update is not a practice that the Ministry regularly follows but rather a one-off use of the word to refer to the wide range of updated assistance. As medical certificates and/or assessments are required for a range of Ministry financial assistance, the use of the word 'product' here is in reference to the broad range of assistance that clients could apply for and need a medical certificate/assessment and was not specifically referring to main benefits. Additionally, the Ministry refers to other assistance as products, such as www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/housing-support-products/index.html and www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/orphans-benefit-and-unsupported-childs-benefit-products/index.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