



7 APR 2017

9(2)(a)



On 3 and 10 March 2017 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- [...]I would like the estimated usage for a 1-person household. I would also like any figures after 2008 for people covered by a Disability Allowance if you have them.
- Prior to November 2016, when using the Powerswitch savings calculator to estimate the usage of 'a normal household of similar usage' with which to compare a client's actual usage, were case managers and Helpline entering the client's power company, plan they were on, and their last 52 weeks power bills?

A Disability Allowance can be paid for additional electricity, gas or heating costs that a person has because of their disability. Payments are made for the costs over and above the normal power consumption of similar-sized households in the area at the same time of the year. The additional power is the amount of power that is a direct result of a client's disability or medical condition.

More information regarding the Ministry's process for assessing additional power usage is available at: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/assessment-of-additional-power-01.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/assessment-of-additional-power-01.html)

The Powerswitch calculator may be one of the steps Ministry staff take during discussions with clients to help determine additional power costs that a person has because of their disability. The calculator provides an estimate of power usage for a similar-sized household that can be compared to the client's actual usage. As each client's circumstances are unique, Ministry staff will consider this alongside other information provided by clients about their additional power requirements due to their disability to establish a payment which best reflects their additional power costs. The Ministry's procedures for assessing a client's additional power usage do not require an estimated power usage for a one person household and therefore Ministry does not hold this information. As such your request for the estimated power usage for a one person household is refused under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act as the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and the Ministry has no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department, Minister of the Crown or organisation and therefore cannot transfer this request.

Ministry staff can make an estimated annual power usage calculation for a specific client based on that client's previous 52 weeks power cost and the type of power plan they have with their power company.

In some circumstances a client may not have access to their previous 52 weeks power costs, in these cases an estimated annual usage calculation can be made based on the power usage a client is able to supply.

All clients are given the opportunity to discuss a figure which better reflects their needs, should they feel that the calculated power cost does not satisfy their actual power costs or usage.

Please refer to the below table for the total number of Disability Allowance payments as at 31 December for the years 2009 to 2016.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Number</b>
2009	251,802
2010	253,709
2011	250,102
2012	244,555
2013	241,465
2014	240,744
2015	239,873
2016	237,011

**Notes:**

- Recipients of Disability Allowance may have more than one cost type so a client may be counted more than once in the same period of time.
- A client may have more than one grant during the reporting period.
- A client may be receiving Disability Allowance for themselves, their partner or a dependent child.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response relating to the Ministry's process for assessing additional power costs and Disability Allowance data with us, please feel free to contact [OIA\\_Requests@msd.govt.nz](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response, 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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ruth Bound'.

Ruth Bound,  
**Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery**