



- 4 JUL 2017

s 9(2)(a) OIA

Dear s 9(2)(a) OIA

On 28 April 2017 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *With regard to benefit sanction figures available here, are the quarterly figures for new sanctions or for total sanctions in place (i.e. they include sanctions that were previously commissioned together with new sanctions)?*
- *Also, could I obtain the total number of sanctions for each year ending March for the last four years if possible please?*

Clients have obligations as part of their benefit. Further information about the obligations beneficiaries are required to meet is available on Work and Income's website: www.workandincome.govt.nz/on-a-benefit/obligations/

The graduated sanctions regime imposes differing levels of financial sanction depending on how many times a client has failed to meet their obligations in a 12 month period. The number of sanctions in force at any given time is small compared to the total number of beneficiaries.

The Benefit Fact Sheets available here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/latest-quarterly-results/benefit-sanctions.html contain two types of data:

- Point-in-time data - Table 1 shows data as at a point in time, for instance the column 'As at 31 Mar-15' includes only the number of graduated sanctions in place at the end of March 2015. Only graduated sanctions can be reported using point-in-time data.
- Flow data - Table 2 shows flow data, for instance, the column 'Mar-15 quarter' is a cumulative count of all sanctions imposed over the quarter (i.e. for the March 2015 quarter this is the graduated, suspended and cancelled sanctions imposed in January, February and March 2015, that may or may not still be in place at the end of the quarter.

The table below shows the total number of sanctions imposed on working age main benefit recipients broken down by year. The data in this table is flow data like in table 2 of the aforementioned Benefit Fact Sheet. The total number of sanctions differ from those in the Benefit Fact Sheet as this data is a cumulative count over the entire year, while the Benefit Fact Sheet is a cumulative count over a quarter.

The number of sanctions imposed on working age main benefit recipients broken down by year ending March 2014, March 2015, March 2016 and March 2017.

Year ending March	Total number of sanctions
2014	58,741
2015	69,106
2016	64,078
2017	55,495

Notes:

- This data includes working age clients only (18 to 64 years).
- This data shows the number of sanctions imposed in the years ending March 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017.
- An individual client may have had more than one sanction imposed during the period.
- Main Benefits exclude NZ Superannuation, Veteran's Pension, Non-Beneficiary assistance, Orphan's Benefit and Unsupported Child's Benefit.

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 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 or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Ruth Bound
Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery