



27 APR 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

On 29 March 2018, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *The total value spent by Work and Income supporting the payment of letting fees during the 2017 calendar year.*

The Ministry of Social Development can pay assistance in relation to letting fees in two ways:

- Advance Payment of Benefit – payment of letting fees is only included in an advance for bond where a client cannot find rental accommodation through other sources. All clients receiving a main benefit and who require assistance to meet a particular immediate need for an essential item have access to an advance of up to 6 weeks of their net benefit entitlement. Consideration must be given to whether an advance would best meet the immediate need, including investigating other sources of assistance and the client's ability to repay the advance.
- Letting Fees Assistance – a Housing Support Product that assists clients who are moving into alternative housing; it is non-recoverable, with the maximum amount payable being one week's rent plus GST.

During the 2017 calendar year, the Ministry made 423 payments of Letting Fees Assistance totalling \$181,837.51.

The Ministry is unable to identify the amount of Advance Payments of Benefit that were made that relate to Letting Fees as there is no unique code for letting fees. I am therefore unable to advise you about the total amount of assistance paid by Work and Income to support the payment of letting fees as it is held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. As such your request for this information is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. 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.

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 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 concerning letting fees, 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



Elisabeth Brunt  
**General Manager Ministerial and Executive Services**