



13 JUL 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

On 25 May 2018, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information regarding the Supported Living Payment (SLP).

1. *Of the people whose entitlement to Supported Living Payment was terminated over the previous 12 months, how many did your Ministry determine were capable of working in open employment for 15 hours or more?*
2. *Of those people, how many had disabilities that the Ministry expected to last for two years or longer?*
3. *Of the people whose entitlement to SLP was terminated over the previous 12 months, how many had disabilities that prevented them from working in open employment for fewer than 15 hours a week but whose disabilities were not expected to last for two years or more?*
4. *Of the people whose entitlement to SLP was terminated over the previous 12 months, how many underwent medical assessments by doctors contracted to MSD?*
5. *Of those people, how many provided reports from their treating doctors?*
6. *Of all the people assessed for entitlement to SLP over the last 12 months, how many provided reports from their treating doctors?*
7. *How many people assessed for entitlement to SLP over the last 12 months who provided reports from their treating doctors either retained their entitlement or had their application approved?*
8. *How does that figure compare with the number of people who did not provide reports from their treating doctors and who subsequently had their entitlement to SLP terminated or their application for the benefit declined?*

I am unable to provide you with this information 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 in excess of ten thousand files. As such I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

The information the Ministry can report on regarding cancellation of SLP is available with the benefit factsheets in the excel table '*National level benefit grants and cancellations data tables*' available at www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/index.html. I can advise that the majority of SLP cancellations are due to the client either transitioning onto a different benefit or to New Zealand Superannuation.

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As you are aware, SLP is for people who are not able to work because they are:

- permanently and severely restricted in their capacity for work because of a health condition, injury, or disability or totally blind or
- caring for a person who requires full-time care and attention at home.

Applications for SLP from some clients with specific diagnoses are administered through a simplified access process that does not have a detailed assessment for their capacity to work. Generally, the diagnosis and associated supporting medical information will satisfy Work and Income that these clients have little or no capacity to work and that this is unlikely to change.

A person's entitlement to SLP is not necessarily dependent on a medical certificate. SLP may be granted based on information provided by their treating doctor and information already held by the Ministry. Further information regarding the SLP is available on the Ministry's Manuals and Procedures website at: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/supported-living-payment/

Before referring a client to a Designated Doctor, most cases are referred to a Regional Health Advisor or Regional Disability Advisor for review. The exception to this is where:

- the GP has indicated on the medical certificate that a second opinion is required
- the client is unable or fails to provide existing reports and/or a medical certificate for a SLP application or medical review and Work and Income records hold insufficient information to decide entitlement
- the client chooses to see a designated doctor for their Supported Living Payment application or medical review.
- the client disagrees with a decision made on medical grounds to decline or cancel certain benefits or payments and wishes to appeal the decision to a Medical Appeals Board.

When a client is referred to a Designated Doctor, a report from the treating Doctor is requested.

9. How many people assessed for entitlement to SLP over the past 12 months and whose entitlement was terminated, or their application declined, have died?

10. Does MSD make any effort, at all, to monitor the wellbeing of people whose entitlement to SLP is declined or their application is declined? If so please disclose all relevant information.

Where a client transfers from SLP to another benefit, their case manager will discuss their requirements and ongoing obligations with them. In addition, for these clients and for those that exit the benefit system, there is an expectation that their treating doctor would continue to monitor their wellbeing.

The Ministry does not track the wellbeing of people who unsuccessfully applied for assistance and are off benefit. Your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act as the information you have requested is not held by the

Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

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.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding cancellations of the SLP, 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



Cassandra Wise
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