



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

1 NOV 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

On 3 October 2018, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *The total expenditure for prescription costs due particularly to the unfunded medications Effexor-XR and Arrow-Venlafaxine through the Disability Allowance between 1 September 2015 -1 31 August 2018.*
- *If it is not possible to locate this specific data I request the total expenditure for prescription costs under the Disability Allowance for the period 1 September 2015 – 31 August 2018.*

The Disability Allowance is a weekly payment for individuals who have on-going and regular costs related to a disability. It can cover things such as doctor and hospital visits, medication or travel. When a client's health practitioner recommends a non-subsidised medication and the client requests for this to be covered by their Disability Allowance, the Ministry needs an indication that all the funded or lower cost alternatives have been tried first and that the medication is essential. Further information about consideration for payments for non-subsidised medication costs and the Disability Allowance can be found on the following two pages on the Work and Income website:

- www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/non-subsidised-pharmaceuticals-01.html.
- www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/pharmaceutical-charges-01.html.

The Ministry is unable to provide information regarding expenditure on non-subsidised medications 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 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.

The Ministry has considered whether it would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. In either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

The table on the following page shows the total number of people receiving the Disability Allowance, the total number of Disability Allowance recipients who receive prescription costs as part of their payments and the total expenditure by the Ministry for prescription costs as part of the Disability Allowance for the period from 1 July 2015 through to 30 September 2018.

Quarter ending	Number of Disability Allowance clients	Number of Disability Allowance clients receiving prescription costs	Total sum of prescription costs for Ministry
September 2015	239,693	195,905	\$542,159
December 2015	239,873	195,903	\$542,515
March 2016	237,128	193,950	\$538,635
June 2016	236,603	193,421	\$542,584
September 2016	237,133	193,646	\$539,471
December 2016	237,011	193,255	\$539,665
March 2017	235,158	191,795	\$535,153
June 2017	234,492	191,315	\$531,421
September 2017	233,217	190,123	\$527,042
December 2017	234,093	190,388	\$529,982
March 2018	232,243	188,843	\$525,319
June 2018	232,915	189,039	\$526,175
September 2018	231,790	187,576	\$524,346

Note:

- The Disability Allowance can be paid to a client or on behalf of a dependent.
- A client may be receiving the Disability Allowance for themselves, their partner or a dependent child, in which case they will be counted more than once.

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, 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

Manager, Issue Resolution, Service Delivery