



Dear [REDACTED]

On 11 September 2018, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information regarding disability allowance for special foods.

On 26 September 2018, you amended your request and asked an additional question. Your questions are addressed in turn below.

- *Can I please be provided with the MSD's definition of "specialty foods" (in reference to specialty foods being applied for, to be included in a disability allowance).*

The definition of special foods in relation to the Disability Allowance, as well as information about how the additional food costs are assessed, is available from the Work and Income website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/special-foods-01.html.

- *What monetary figure do the MSD consider to be a realistic ongoing cost of groceries for a solo mother and two children? Is there a guideline for this or a percentage of a WINZ clients benefit that is considered appropriate for food costs?*

The Ministry does not have a figure that it considers to be a realistic on-going cost of groceries for a solo mother and two children, or a percentage of a client's benefit that is considered appropriated for food costs. Benefit levels are set in legislation and adjusted each year. It is for an individual to determine how they spend their money. How much people spend on food is based on a number of variables, such as affordability, living arrangements, diet and so on.

As such, your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act, as the information you have requested does not exist.

- *Under the MSD's policies, is there a set capped monetary amount in which a beneficiary can apply for specialty foods to be included within their disability allowance? And if so, what is that amount.*

Disability Allowance can be paid to cover the additional costs of special foods that a person needs because of their disability. The cost of special foods can be included if they are for additional food or food supplements beyond most people's everyday needs, above usual food costs and part of a diet supervised by a registered dietician. Further information regarding how this calculation is carried out is available from the

Ministry's website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/assessing-additional-food-costs-01.html.

The maximum Disability Allowance rate is currently \$63.22 per week. This is a non-taxable rate.

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 and attachments 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
Team Manager, Issue Resolution