



Dear [REDACTED]

On 18 July, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *The number of beneficiaries required to undergo pre-employment drug testing in the year to June 2019*
- *The number who failed*
- *The number of sanctions applied*

Work and Income works closely with people receiving a benefit to support them into employment. In some cases, clients are required to take drug tests at the request and cost of a prospective employer. Pre-employment drug tests are common in industries such as fishing, horticulture, transport and forestry.

This policy aims to help people apply for drug tested jobs who have previously been prevented from taking up suitable employment due to drug use.

The Ministry aims to support New Zealanders to be safe, strong and independent. This involves incentivising clients to comply with their benefit obligations. Should a client fail the drug test (drug related obligation failure), they need to speak to their Work and Income Case Manager within five working days of the failure.

People who have been identified as having a drug dependency will not be sanctioned under this policy and will receive support to help them stop engaging in drug use.

The drug testing policy for those with work obligations allows the employer to be reimbursed for the test if a person fails, as long as the employer has informed Work and Income at the time of lodging the vacancy that the job requires a pre-employment drug test.

For the sake of clarity your questions are addressed in turn:

1. *The number of beneficiaries required to undergo pre-employment drug testing in the year to June 2019.*

There were 39,341 referrals nationally to drug testable positions in the 2018/19 financial year to 30 June 2019. As clients may be referred to more than one drug testable position during a requesting period, the Ministry reports on the number of referrals, rather than the number of clients.

Please note that not all clients referred to a drug testable position will undertake a drug test. Whether a drug test is undertaken is at the discretion of the employer and

would likely only occur towards the end of the selection process for the successful job applicants.

2. The number who failed.

In the financial year to 30 June 2019 there were 114 drug test related obligation failures nationally. This is a count of drug test obligation failures, not a count of clients.

3. The number of sanctions applied.

In the 2018/19 financial year to 30 June 2019 there were 72 drug related sanctions nationally. Please note this is a count of sanctions, not a count of clients.

A client who fails an obligation drug test can consider doing a re-compliance activity, for example another drug test. If the client passes their second drug test within five working days, they will not be sanctioned. Should a client fail a second drug test, they are required to pass a further drug test within 25 working days.

Further information about what happens when a client fails or does not take a pre-employment drug test is available on the Work and Income website at: www.workandincome.govt.nz/on-a-benefit/not-meeting-your-obligations.html.

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.

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

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