



Dear 

On 14 June 2019, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *The number of funerals that the government has paid for over the past five years 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019? By year and region.*
- *The reason why the government has paid for the funeral?*
- *The cost for a funeral?*
- *What does the cost cover?*
- *Are people buried or cremated? Where are they buried? Do they get headstones?*

The Ministry provides Funeral Grants to help those who have no other means to meet the costs of a funeral. A Funeral Grant assists people with actual and reasonable funeral costs and is not designed to cover all funeral expenses. The maximum amount of the grant is \$2,093.31. Funeral Grants are income and asset tested and eligibility takes into consideration whether the deceased person has a surviving partner or dependent child or if the deceased is a child.

Further information on the eligibility criteria for a Funeral Grant can be found on Work and Income's website: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/funeral-grant.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/funeral-grant.html) and [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/funeral-grant/index.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/funeral-grant/index.html).

You may also be interested to note that other government agencies, such as ACC and Veterans' Affairs, can also assist with funeral expenses.

Expenses that can be met through a Funeral Grant include:

- Professional services with regard to preparing the body for cremation or burial (for example, embalming)
- Cost of a casket
- Newspaper notice costs
- Hearse fees
- Compulsory fees for the purchase of a burial plot
- Cremation fees

Funeral expenses that arise from choice, such as flowers, and donations to clergy or musicians are not covered by the grant. More information about essential funeral expenses can be found here: <http://doogie.ssi.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/funeral-grant/essential-funeral-expenses.html>

Enclosed is a table that provides the total number of Funeral Grants, and the total and average amount granted in the financial years 2014/2015 to 2018/2019 by Work and Income region.

I am unable to provide you with information about whether people are buried or cremated, where they are buried, or whether they get headstones. If held, these specific details are 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 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.

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 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](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response about Funeral Grants, 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



Cassandra Wise  
**Manager Issue Resolution  
Service Delivery**

**Table one: The total number of Funeral Grants, and the total and average amount granted in the financial years 2014/2015 to 2018/2019 by Work and Income region**

Year	Work and Income region	Number of grants	Total amount granted	Average amount granted
2014/2015	Northland	176	\$325,835.06	\$1,851.34
	Auckland Metro	947	\$1,762,200.50	\$1,860.82
	Waikato	257	\$453,653.57	\$1,765.19
	Taranaki	149	\$284,149.12	\$1,907.04
	Bay of Plenty	330	\$616,892.23	\$1,869.37
	East Coast	178	\$336,334.49	\$1,889.52
	Central	179	\$331,579.57	\$1,852.40
	Wellington	207	\$393,987.73	\$1,903.32
	Nelson	96	\$181,863.87	\$1,894.42
	Canterbury	247	\$469,379.55	\$1,900.32
	Southern	174	\$319,319.33	\$1,835.17
Other	1,978	\$3,620,355.09	\$1,830.31	
<b>Total</b>		<b>4,918</b>	<b>\$9,095,550.11</b>	<b>\$1,849.44</b>
2015/2016	Northland	291	\$545,571.42	\$1,874.82
	Auckland Metro	1,225	\$2,302,290.24	\$1,879.42
	Waikato	456	\$838,426.33	\$1,838.65
	Taranaki	249	\$469,692.43	\$1,886.31
	Bay of Plenty	559	\$1,013,440.80	\$1,812.95
	East Coast	214	\$405,254.66	\$1,893.71
	Central	290	\$529,272.76	\$1,825.08

Year	Work and Income region	Number of grants	Total amount granted	Average amount granted
2016/2017	Wellington	357	\$690,934.22	\$1,935.39
	Nelson	177	\$328,780.21	\$1,857.52
	Canterbury	439	\$819,147.78	\$1,865.94
	Southern	337	\$612,895.59	\$1,818.68
	Other	90	\$168,778.40	\$1,875.32
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,684</b>	<b>\$8,724,484.84</b>	<b>\$1,862.61</b>
	Northland	242	\$461,174.57	\$1,905.68
	Auckland Metro	1,159	\$2,204,086.08	\$1,901.71
	Waikato	378	\$708,756.11	\$1,875.02
	Taranaki	177	\$338,180.04	\$1,910.62
	Bay of Plenty	391	\$721,148.73	\$1,844.37
	East Coast	228	\$437,822.85	\$1,920.28
	Central	224	\$406,085.32	\$1,812.88
	Wellington	245	\$464,057.25	\$1,894.11
Nelson	166	\$307,378.00	\$1,851.67	
Canterbury	375	\$701,259.48	\$1,870.03	
Southern	320	\$591,725.43	\$1,849.14	
Other	685	\$1,210,863.31	\$1,767.68	
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,590</b>	<b>\$8,552,537.17</b>	<b>\$1,863.30</b>	
2017/2018	Northland	222	\$420,193.63	\$1,892.76
	Auckland Metro	1,227	\$2,374,577.46	\$1,935.27
	Waikato	277	\$513,106.26	\$1,852.37
	Taranaki	166	\$296,290.50	\$1,784.88

Year	Work and Income region	Number of grants	Total amount granted	Average amount granted
2018/2019 year to date	Bay of Plenty	375	\$703,776.35	\$1,876.74
	East Coast	181	\$343,440.90	\$1,897.46
	Central	237	\$446,872.46	\$1,885.54
	Wellington	246	\$479,815.40	\$1,950.47
	Nelson	129	\$243,483.45	\$1,887.47
	Canterbury	319	\$602,958.78	\$1,890.15
	Southern	180	\$325,005.17	\$1,805.58
	Other	1,376	\$2,526,573.00	\$1,836.17
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,935</b>	<b>\$9,276,093.36</b>	<b>\$1,879.65</b>
	Northland	209	\$413,089.94	\$1,976.51
	Auckland Metro	1,064	\$2,065,997.42	\$1,941.73
	Waikato	297	\$555,849.57	\$1,871.55
	Taranaki	173	\$322,754.75	\$1,865.63
	Bay of Plenty	419	\$801,242.65	\$1,912.27
	East Coast	185	\$359,414.48	\$1,942.78
	Central	263	\$499,799.52	\$1,900.38
	Wellington	242	\$476,848.69	\$1,970.45
	Nelson	148	\$283,363.05	\$1,914.62
	Canterbury	290	\$532,899.83	\$1,837.59
	Southern	291	\$527,811.88	\$1,813.79
Other	241	\$447,493.31	\$1,856.82	
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,822</b>	<b>\$7,286,565.09</b>	<b>\$1,906.48</b>	

**Note:**

- This is the number of funeral grants processed, not the number of clients.
- A funeral grant is generally processed through the deceased's record or deceased children through their parents', guardian's or primary caregiver's record.
- Geographic breakdowns are only available by the MSD Service Centre responsible for the client's case management. A client may not necessarily reside in the same area as their service centre.
- The 'other' region includes clients managed from non-regional service centres such as the Centralised Unit Housing, Studylink Processing Centre, National Office and NZ Super service centres.
- Financial year is 1 July to 30 June and includes the period between.
- The 2018/2019 financial year is year to date, 1 July 2018 to 31 March 2019.