



18 AUG 2020

Tēnā koe

On 23 July 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *Why the Ministry limits choices of frames to the \$69 and \$99 range of Specsavers.*

Work and Income, a service line of the Ministry, provides hardship assistance to help people pay for essential items or services they need urgently. Hardship assistance includes Special Needs Grants (SNGs) which provide non-taxable, one-off recoverable or non-recoverable financial assistance to people to meet immediate needs, such as a grant for glasses.

These payments are available to any person as long as they meet the income and asset test, and they are unable to meet the cost for an essential need from any other source. Work and Income also ensures that people receive their correct entitlement to any other financial assistance as part of the application and assessment process.

You can find further general information about hardship assistance for glasses on the Work and Income website available at: www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/health-and-disability/glasses.html#null.

From 2014, the Ministry entered into preferred supplier arrangements with a number of optical suppliers, for the provision of optical goods and services. Having a preferred supplier arrangement ensures that the majority of clients' immediate and essential needs will be met within the maximum assistance limit, therefore offering clients competitive pricing and reduced debt levels.

The full list of preferred suppliers for glasses in each region can be accessed on the Work and Income website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/health-and-disability/glasses-suppliers/index.html.

The maximum amount that can be paid for optical goods and services is \$249. However, the actual amount granted is based on each client's individual needs.

All preferred optical suppliers contracted to the Ministry, including Specsavers, offer a set range of options available to clients. It is up to each supplier to determine the price range of frames they can offer the client while also ensuring they are still able to deliver an eye examination, appropriate spectacle lens, fitting service and a protective case within the hardship assistance limit of \$249.

The current optometry package available from suppliers consists of:

- an eye test

- standard lens, single vision, bifocals or progressives
- frames (a selected range to choose from)
- a fitting service, including new lens to existing frames supplied by the client
- a range of single vision ready to wear spectacles
- repairs or spare parts replacements (if defective)
- a cleaning cloth and protective case
- a 2-year warranty for defective materials and fittings

Some clients have high clinical needs, which means the glasses they require cannot be provided at the standard contract price with maximum limit of \$249. In this situation, hardship assistance for a higher amount than the standard package amount can be provided for clients with high clinical needs.

More information about how the Ministry can assist clients with high clinical needs is available on the Work and Income website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/advance-payment-of-benefit/glasses-01.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. 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 hardship assistance for glasses, 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.

Nāku noa, nā



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