



19 AUG 2020

Dear

On 3 July 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Data on all benefits paid to people over 65 for a research project that I am doing. I am trying to show that incentivising people to put more money into KiwiSaver via tax breaks will actually save money in the longer run.*

On 14 July 2020, you clarified your request with the following:

- *I'm after all benefits paid outside of Veterans Pension NZ Super. This will also include the regular supplementary payments.*
- *Is it possible to get them for the most recent quarter and compare them to the same quarter over the past 5 years?*

New Zealand Superannuation (NZS) provides a retirement income for clients who have reached 65 years of age. A client may qualify for NZS if they meet the age and residency requirements. To meet the residency requirements, a client must:

- be either:
 - a New Zealand citizen
 - a permanent resident, or
 - hold a residence class visa
- be ordinarily resident in New Zealand, the Cook Islands, Niue, or Tokelau when they apply, and
- have lived in New Zealand for at least 10 years since they turned 20, including for at least 5 years (in New Zealand, the Cook Islands, Niue or Tokelau) since they turned 50.

NZS is one of the few international pension schemes that is given to everyone who meets the residency requirements. The Veterans Pension (VP) has the same residency and age requirements as NZS but it is only available to New Zealand veterans who have recognised service. For further details regarding the eligibility criteria for New Zealand Superannuation, please see this link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/seniors/superannuation/superannuation-overview.html#null.

If a client does not meet the eligibility criteria for NZS, he or she may still be entitled to a main benefit, such as Jobseeker Support or Supported Living Payment. In addition, clients can apply for a range of supplementary assistance, which is designed to help low-income people to meet costs, such as those arising from housing, childcare, and heating – and from health conditions and disabilities. Almost all supplementary assistance is income tested, and some is also asset tested, to ensure it is targeted to people who require additional help.

Supplementary assistance is non-taxable and available to people receiving main benefits and to those working on low (and sometime middle) incomes. These payments include, but are not limited to:

- **Accommodation Supplement:** a weekly payment that helps people with their rent, board, or the cost of owning a home.
- **Disability Allowance:** which provides non-taxable assistance to people who have on-going, additional costs because of a disability or a health condition.
- **Temporary Additional Support:** a non-taxable, weekly payment that can be paid for a maximum of 13 weeks. It is paid as a last resort to help clients with their regular essential living costs when these cannot be met from their income or from other resources.
- **Special Benefit:** a discretionary, non-taxable benefit that provides assistance to clients whose circumstances are causing them hardship. Special Benefit is only available to people who have been receiving or applied for this type of assistance before 1 April 2006, at which date it was replaced by Temporary Additional Support.

As per your request, please see Appendix One, which includes the following two tables:

- **Table One:** The number of clients 65 years of age or older receiving a main benefit, including the total amount paid, as at the end of June for the years 2016 to 2020.
- **Table Two** The number of clients 65 years of age or older receiving supplementary assistance, including the total amount paid, as at the end of June for the years 2016 to 2020.

It is worth noting that the Ministry publishes Benefit Fact Sheets, which provide a high-level view of trends in benefit receipt. These are published quarterly and can be found on the Ministry's website at the following link: <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/index.html>

Specifically, on that web page, please see the *New Zealand Superannuation and Veteran's Pension data table – June 2020*, which shows, for the last 5 years, the number of NZS and VP recipients who were also in receipt of the Accommodation Supplement, Disability Allowance, and/or Temporary Additional Support.

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. 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 regarding data on beneficiaries 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



Bridget Saunders
Manager
Issue Resolution, Service Delivery

Appendix One

Table One: Number of clients 65 years of age or older receiving a main benefit, including the total amount paid, as at the end of June for the years 2016 to 2020

Year	Emergency Benefit	Emergency Maintenance Allowance	Jobseeker Support	Non-Beneficiary Assistance	Supported Living Payment	Sole Parent Support	Widow's Benefit Overseas	TOTAL	Total amount paid
2016	4,217	0	389	384	3,152	S	S	8,146	\$1,371,003.21
2017	3,821	0	420	410	3,195	S	S	7,852	\$1,304,762.03
2018	3,465	S	467	384	1,759	S	S	6,082	\$1,100,559.96
2019	3,236	S	472	425	1,800	S	S	5,939	\$1,072,224.35
2020	3,415	S	610	S	1,947	S	S	6,447	\$1,296,472.80

Table Two: Number of clients 65 years of age or older receiving supplementary assistance, including the amount paid, as at the end of June for the years 2016 to 2020

Year	Accommodation Supplement	Disability Allowance	Special Benefit	Temporary Additional Support	Total amount paid
2016	40,847	129,169	267	5,322	\$6,032,387
2017	42,526	128,902	222	6,347	\$6,248,676
2018	43,087	128,742	81	6,587	\$6,922,951
2019	45,080	129,256	58	7,314	\$7,337,841
2020	47,851	129,296	55	9,284	\$7,824,624

Notes for Table One and Table Two:

- Number of clients is as at the last week of June.
- Total amount paid is the amount paid in the last week of June.
- Table One includes all clients receiving a main benefit other than NZS and VP.
- Table Two includes all clients 65 years of age or older (i.e., both those receiving a main benefit and those receiving NZS or VP).
- Numbers 5 or lower have been suppressed. In certain circumstances, low numbers may potentially lead to individuals being identified. Due to these privacy concerns, numbers for some categories of clients have been suppressed or aggregated under section 9(2)(a) of the Act.

- Secondary suppression rules have also been applied when required. Suppressed numbers have been replaced by an 'S'.
- Non-beneficiary assistance refers to those clients who are not receiving a main benefit or NZS but who have received some form of supplementary assistance. However, the total amount paid for non-beneficiary assistance only includes weekly supplementary payments, such as the Accommodation Supplement and Disability Allowance. I.e., it does not include Special Needs Grants, which are one-off payments to cover immediate and essential costs.
- From July 2013, the Widow's Benefit for New Zealand-based clients was absorbed into Jobseeker Support. However, New Zealand has reciprocal agreements with several countries, which enable some New Zealand benefits and pensions, including the Widow's Benefit, to continue to be paid to eligible clients residing overseas.
- The above tables do not include benefits and supplementary payments made to parents and caregivers on behalf of a child, such as Child Disability Allowance, Child Care Assistance, Orphan's Benefit, and Unsupported Child's Benefit. However, some clients 65 years and over may be receiving these payments.