



22 DEC 2020

Tēnā koe

On 25 November 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Data on how many homeowners, and hence ratepayers, have applied for benefits as a result of Covid-19, particularly in Auckland?*

On 1 December 2020, you emailed the Ministry further requesting, under the Act, the following information:

- *Information on which industries those who have lost their jobs have come from.*

In response to question one of your request regarding how many homeowners have applied for a benefit, as a result of COVID-19, I am unable to provide you with this information as it would be held as notes and contained within 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 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.

Although question one of your request has been refused under section 18(f) of the act, the Ministry can provide you with information on the number of homeowners in the Auckland Territorial Local Authority (TLA) receiving an Accommodation Supplement (AS) for 2020, broken down by quarter.

Please see **Table One** in **Appendix A** which shows the number of current clients receiving Accommodation Supplement with tenure type listed as 'Own Home' in the Auckland Super City versus the rest of New Zealand for quarters ending September 2019 to September 2020.

The Accommodation Supplement is a non-taxable benefit that provides assistance towards a client's accommodation costs. A person does not have to be getting a benefit to qualify for the Accommodation Supplement, however they must meet an income and asset test. More information about the Accommodation Supplement can be found at the following link on Work and Income's website: www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/accommodation-supplement.html.

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In response to question two of your request, the Ministry does not hold information on which industries those who have lost their jobs have come from, therefore I am refusing this request under section 18(g)(i) of the Act as the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

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 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 relating to homeowners receiving benefits as a result of COVID-19 in Auckland, 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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Bridget Saunders
Manager
Issue Resolution, Service Delivery

Appendix A:

Table One: The number of current clients receiving Accommodation Supplement with tenure type listed as 'Own Home' broken down by location for quarters ending September 2019 to September 2020.

As at end of quarter	Auckland Super City	Outside of Auckland Super City	Total
September 2019	9,712	23,523	33,235
December 2019	9,745	23,857	33,602
March 2020	9,887	23,847	33,734
June 2020	11,355	25,886	37,241
September 2020	12,179	27,224	39,403

Notes:

- Accommodation Supplement is not paid for clients (main signatory and their partners) in HNZ (Housing New Zealand) accommodation or any other Community Housing Provider property where the provider is receiving Income Related Rent (IRR).