




27 FEB 2020



Tēnā koe 

On 12 November 2019, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

Number of Special Needs Grants for food for Invercargill and Gore including the range of amounts of food grants given for the last five years.

On 31 January 2020, the Ministry contacted you to apologise for the delay in responding to your request, and to confirm the information being provided.

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 food grant.

A person does not have to be getting a benefit to qualify for an SNG, but they must meet an income and asset test. More information about SNGs for food is available on Work and Income's website at: www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/urgent-costs/food.html.

Increases in SNGs for food are directly related to the rise in housing costs. In regions where there has been a rapid increase in housing costs there is generally a corresponding increase in SNGs. For example, the rising trend in Hardship Grants for food in Auckland appears to mirror the rise in housing costs; whereas in an area where accommodation costs have been stable, such as Bluff, Work and Income have not seen an increase in Hardship Grants.

Over the last two years, the Ministry has worked to improve the accessibility of assistance, including SNGs being granted by our Contact Centre or through our online service, MyMSD. People no longer need to wait at a Service Centre for this emergency assistance.

Please find attached two tables:

- **Table One** shows the number of Special Needs Grants for food in Gore, broken down by dollar bands and calendar year, from 2015-2019.
- **Table Two** shows the number of Special Needs Grants for food in Invercargill, broken down by dollar bands and calendar year, from 2015-2019.

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 about Special Needs Grants for food in Gore and Invercargill, 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

Table One: Number of Special Needs Grants for food in Gore, broken down by dollar bands and calendar year, from 2015-2019.

Calendar Year	Number of Grants by Dollar Bands								Number of Grants
	Less than \$20	\$20.01 to \$40	\$40.01 to \$60	\$60.01 to \$80	\$80.01 to \$100	\$100.01 to \$150	\$150.01 to \$200	More than \$200	
2015	9	31	134	105	282	257	102	15	935
2016	7	33	111	106	361	253	139	11	1,021
2017	23	43	134	78	491	281	142	25	1,217
2018	21	52	116	83	395	266	158	22	1,113
2019	35	67	133	77	404	238	127	31	1,112

Table Two: Number of Special Needs Grants for food in Invercargill, broken down by dollar bands and calendar year, from 2015-2019.

Calendar Year	Number of Grants by Dollar Bands								Number of Grants
	Less than \$20	\$20.01 to \$40	\$40.01 to \$60	\$60.01 to \$80	\$80.01 to \$100	\$100.01 to \$150	\$150.01 to \$200	More than \$200	
2015	53	221	877	833	2,156	1,887	1,074	221	7,322
2016	64	238	792	884	2,133	1,727	1,018	216	7,072
2017	83	239	805	725	2,019	1,502	697	161	6,231
2018	93	258	705	636	1,409	1,120	546	154	4,921
2019	109	205	676	464	1,235	892	441	136	4,158

Notes:

- Site is based on the Work and Income site where the recommending case manager for the application was located at the time of the grant.
- This includes clients of all ages and benefit types (including Superannuitants).
- This is a count of grants. A client may have more than one grant in the time period.