



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

09 JUN 2020

Dear [REDACTED]

On 8 May 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *How many people are on an income that is below the living wage and have not been able to access the wage subsidy?*
- *How many people who are not eligible for the wage subsidy but earn too much for the benefit have applied for support in the past 10 weeks?*

You also emailed the Minister for Social Development, Hon Carmel Sepuloni, on 8 May 2020, and the Minister of Finance, Hon Grant Roberston, on 9 May 2020, with the same request. As the matters you have raised more closely align with the operational functions of the Ministry, your request to both Ministers have been transferred to the Ministry for response.

The Wage Subsidy application does not capture the income of individual employees as the Ministry assesses the eligibility of a business, rather than the eligibility of its employees. As the income of a client does not affect their entitlement to the Wage Subsidy, we are unable to make the connection of an individual in a business ineligible for the Wage Subsidy and that same individual having too much income for a main benefit.

Therefore, both aspects of your request for information are refused under section 18(g) of the Act, as the Ministry does not hold information relating to the income of individuals who were named in Wage Subsidy applications.

Although the Ministry is unable to provide the information you have requested, you might be interested in the number of main benefit applications that were declined per month due to excess household income. Household income is comprised of the income of the applicant and their partner. This information is enclosed at the end of this response as Appendix A.

Please note there is no direct correlation between the number of declines of main benefit applications and Wage Subsidy applications as the Wage Subsidy scheme is about the entitlement of business to the payment.

You will notice a sharp increase in declines for the Jobseeker Support benefit in April 2020. As a result of job loss from the impacts of COVID-19, the Ministry received a

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significant increase in new benefit applications. As the application numbers increase, it is expected that the number of declines will also increase.

The Ministry's Monthly Benefit Update report shows that at the end of April 2020, recipients of the Jobseeker Support benefit increased by 38,425 since February 2020. This report can be found here: [www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/covid-19/index.html](http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/covid-19/index.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 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](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response to your request for information regarding people who have been unable to access the Wage Subsidy or a main benefit, 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

   
 px

Bridget Saunders  
**Manager, Issue Resolution, Service Delivery**

**Appendix A: Number of main benefit applications declined due to excess household income between January 2020 and April 2020**

Month	Sole Parent Support	Supported Living Payment	Job Seeker Student Hardship	Emergency Benefit	Job Seeker	Youth Payment
January 2020	15	13	27	7	77	0
February 2020	15	20	13	S	135	0
March 2020	16	23	6	S	162	S
April 2020	54	21	S	24	1,019	0

**Notes:**

- This is a count of applications declined, not a count of people.
- A person may have more than one application declined in the period.
- Income is assessed per household not by individuals. *Household income is comprised of the income of an applicant and their partner.*
- Main Benefits exclude NZ Superannuation, Veteran's Pension, Non-Beneficiary assistance, Orphan's Benefit and Unsupported Child's Benefit.
- 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.
- Suppressed numbers have been replaced by an 'S'.