



19 NOV 2020

On 22 October 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *How many known gang members are receiving benefits in Hawkes Bay.*
- *How many beneficiaries are able to do seasonal work in Hawkes Bay and what consequence there currently is for refusing to do seasonal work (I.e. is there a benefit stand down for not accepting seasonal picking jobs?).*

The Ministry does not record whether a client is affiliated with a gang. Nor does the Ministry necessarily record whether a client is specifically able to do seasonal work. As such, your request is refused under section 18(g)(i) of the Act. The information you have requested is not held by the Ministry, and I have no grounds to believe that this information would be held by another department or by a Minister of the Crown.

The Ministry instead records the number of clients receiving the Job Seeker Support benefit who are 'work ready'; i.e., willing and able to undertake some kind of full-time employment. This information can be broken down by regions or as requested. Therefore, in an effort to assist, please see the table enclosed in **Appendix One**, which outlines the number of Job Seeker Work Ready clients in the Hawkes Bay Region as at the end of October 2020, broken down by age group.

Please note that Jobseeker Support Work Ready clients must be available for and take reasonable steps to find *suitable* employment of at least 30 hours per week. More information about work obligations for clients in receipt of Jobseeker Support can be found here: <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/jobseeker-support/work-obligations-01.html>.

Suitable employment varies between clients and depends on their individual circumstances. Thus, seasonal picking work may be suitable for some Jobseeker Work Ready clients but not for others. More information about what constitutes suitable employment for clients in receipt of Jobseeker Support can be found here: <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/jobseeker-support/suitable-employment-01.html>

A client who refuses, without good reason, an offer of suitable employment may receive what is referred to in the Ministry as a Grade 3 sanction – benefit cancellation and/or a 13-week non-entitlement period. However, in such circumstances, a sanction can be withdrawn when a client provides additional information or an explanation that is deemed adequate. Furthermore, a large majority of clients will re-comply before their benefit is impacted. For more information about Grade 3 sanctions, please see this link: <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/jobseeker-support/grade-three-sanction-or-job-refusal-failure-13-week-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 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, 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



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Bridget Saunders
Manager
Issue Resolution, Service Delivery

Appendix One:

Job Seeker (JS) Work Ready clients in the Hawke's Bay Region as at the end of October 2020, by age group.

Age Group	JS Work Ready related
18-19	486
20-24	1,111
25-29	787
30-34	608
35-39	494
40-44	400
45-49	423
50-54	383
55-59	364
60-64	311
Total	5,367

Notes:

- The table includes working age clients only (i.e. clients aged 18 to 64 years)
- Region is based on the Work and Income region where the approving case manager was based at the time of the application.
- 'Hawkes Bay Region' refers to applications approved by staff at the Napier, Flaxmere, Hastings, Waipukurau, Wairoa, and Taradale service centres
- The 'JS Work Ready' figures include Jobseeker Support Work Ready and Jobseeker Support Work Ready Hardship clients but do not include JS clients who have only part-time work obligations due to a health condition or disability.