



08 OCT 2020

Dear

On 10 September 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *All reports, briefings, and other documents provided to the Minister related to the COVID-19 Income Relief Payment.*
- *All reports, briefings, and other documents provided to the Minister related to the implementation of the COVID-19 Income Relief Payment.*
- *All reports, briefings, and other documents provided to the Minister in relation to the implementation of a high trust model in administering the COVID-19 Income Relief Payment.*
- *Data pertaining to who has accessed the COVID-19 Income Relief Payment with a breakdown of all data by ethnicity and gender.*
- *Data on the number of hardship grants given to people from 1 March 2020 to October, broken down by those receiving the COVID-19 Income Relief Payment, those on the Jobseeker Benefit, Supported Living Payment and all other main benefit types.*
- *Data on the number of people receiving the Accommodation Supplement, broken down by those receiving the COVID-19 Income Relief Payment, Jobseeker Benefit, Supported Living Payment and all other main benefit types.*

On 10 September 2020, you were informed that part of your request would be transferred to the Minister for Social Development, Hon Carmel Sepuloni. You can expect to receive a separate response from the Minister's office regarding the following questions:

- *All reports, briefings, and other documents provided to the Minister related to the COVID-19 Income Relief Payment.*
- *All reports, briefings, and other documents provided to the Minister related to the implementation of the COVID-19 Income Relief Payment.*
- *All reports, briefings, and other documents provided to the Minister in relation to the implementation of a high trust model in administering the COVID-19 Income Relief Payment.*

The Ministry will respond to the remaining questions which I will address in turn.

The COVID-19 Income Relief Payment (CIRP) provides temporary financial support to clients who have lost employment due to the impacts of COVID-19. Depending on the client's needs, they may choose to receive the CIRP as opposed to the main benefit. CIRP became available on 8 June 2020 and clients can receive the payment for a maximum of 12 weeks.

Entitlement to the CIRP is largely based on the individual's circumstances. Both partners in a couple can qualify for the payment. Payments must be apportioned between couples unless an exception applies.

The Ministry, through Work and Income, provides recoverable and non-recoverable financial assistance to help people meet an immediate need for essential items such as food, health costs, power and other costs. These are often considered as Hardship grants. Hardship grants include Special Needs Grants (SNG), Benefit Advances (ADV) and Recoverable Assistance Payments (RAP).

These payments are available to any person as long as they meet the income and asset test, and they are unable to meet the cost for an essential need from any other source. The Ministry ensures that people receive their correct entitlement to any other financial assistance as part of the application and assessment process.

The Ministry assists people to manage their costs in the longer term, not just with immediate and urgent assistance. It is important to understand why the client cannot meet these costs, to provide the most appropriate form of assistance. The applicant also has an obligation to manage their own finances with the help of the Ministry. This may include seeking financial advice from budgeting services.

An Accommodation Supplement is a non-taxable benefit that provides assistance towards a client's accommodation costs. A person does not have to be receiving a benefit to qualify for Accommodation Supplement, but they must meet an income and asset test.

Further information about financial assistance and eligibility can be found at the following link: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/individuals/a-z-benefits/index.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/individuals/a-z-benefits/index.html).

Please find an attached excel spreadsheet with the following six tables:

- **Table One:** The total number of CIRP grants by month, from 8 June 2020 to 31 August 2020, broken down by gender.
- **Table Two:** The total number of CIRP grants by month, from 8 June 2020 to 31 August 2020, broken down by ethnicity.
- **Table Three:** The total number of Hardship grants by month from 1 March 2020 to 31 August 2020, broken down by CIRP, main benefit types and gender.
- **Table Four:** The total number of Hardship grants by month from 1 March 2020 to 31 August 2020, broken down by CIRP, main benefit types and ethnicity.

- **Table Five:** The total number of Accommodation Supplement grants by month, from 1 March 2020 to 31 August 2020, broken down by CIRP, main benefit types and gender.
- **Table Six:** The total number of Accommodation Supplement grants by month, from 1 March 2020 to 31 August 2020, broken down by CIRP, main benefit types and ethnicity.

Please note that in order to protect client privacy, some values in the tables provided are suppressed and are represented by 'S'. The Ministry is unable to provide you with the exact number as releasing this information is likely to risk identifying the individuals concerned. As such, this information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in the information.

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
- 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](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding CIRP grants, 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

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