



15 JUL 2021

Dear

On 18 June 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- 1. Data regarding the number of grants for dental treatment, since Jan 2014, broken down by year, ethnicity, and gender, and by whether they were non-recoverable, partially recoverable, or fully recoverable.*

The Ministry provides recoverable and non-recoverable financial assistance to people to meet an immediate need for essential items such as food, health costs (including medical and dental costs), power and other costs. These payments are available to any person so long as they meet the income and asset test, and they are unable to meet the cost from any other source.

The Ministry recognises that individuals who are in receipt of a benefit may not be able to budget for unexpected dental costs, and support is available for those who meet the criteria to help with the cost of dental work.

The maximum amount payable to a person applying for a non-recoverable Special Needs Grant towards the cost of dental treatment is \$300 within any 52 week period. Where exceptional circumstances apply, this amount may be exceeded, or more than one payment may be made. In situations where there are no exceptional circumstances, or where individuals do not meet the qualifying criteria for a Special Needs Grant, they may qualify for an Advance Payment of Benefit to meet any or all remaining costs.

Repayment arrangements for recoverable assistance are agreed at the outset, taking a client's individual circumstances and financial situation into account.

All dental treatments funded through the Ministry must be provided by a health agency or registered dental practitioner. Examples of a qualifying dental situation include, but are not limited to, root treatment, tooth extraction, tooth restoration and treatment of acute infection.

Please find the following tables in the attached excel spreadsheet:

**Table One:** The number and amount of hardship grants approved for reason 'Emergency Dental' in the calendar years 2014 to 2020 and March quarter of 2021, broken down by type of grant, recoverable indicator and year.

**Table Two:** The number and amount of hardship grants approved for reason 'Emergency Dental' in the calendar years 2014 to 2020 and March quarter of 2021, broken down by type of gender, recoverable indicator and year.

**Table Three:** The number and amount of hardship grants approved for reason 'Emergency Dental' in the calendar years 2014 to 2020 and March quarter of 2021, broken down by type of ethnicity recoverable indicator and year.

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 dental 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



Bridget Saunders  
**Manager, Issue Resolution  
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