



03 JUN 2021

Dear

On 7 May 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *How much is paid to Sole Parent Support (SPS) recipients currently (NZ total and average amount per recipient)*
- *WINZ annual budget for Accommodation supplement payments. Year spend to date*
- *How much of this SPS recipients receive in total - Budget for childcare for SPS recipients; spend to date and how much do SPS recipients receive on average?*
- *How many interactions a year your SPS recipients have with you - If available, the average length of time for someone to apply & receive SPS in the past year (from initial application to being paid)*
- *Average, mean & median number of dependent children for SPS recipients in Auckland (if available, and also for all NZ)*

The Sole Parent Support (SPS) is a weekly payment that helps single parents find part-time work or get ready for future work. To qualify for SPS a client must:

- be aged 20 years or older and;
- have continuously lived in New Zealand for 2 years or more since becoming a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident and;
- be ordinarily residing in New Zealand when they first apply for benefit.

More information about the SPS can be found on the Ministry's website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/sole-parent-support/index.html.

Please find **Table One** below, which outlines the number of and amount paid for Sole Parent Support and the number, average and median figures of children associated with those Sole Parent Support applications, broken down by Work and Income region, as at end of March 2021.

Table One: The number of recipients and amount paid for Sole Parent Support and the number, average and median figures of children associated with those Sole Parent Support applications, broken down by Work and Income region, as at end of March 2021.

Work and Income Region	Net Weekly Amount	Number of SPS recipients	Number of Children	Average number of Children	Median Number of Children
Northland	\$1,488,414.06	4,101	8,439	2	2
Auckland Metro	\$7,895,273.26	21,780	44,367	2	2
Waikato	\$2,264,104.94	6,195	12,414	2	2
Taranaki	\$1,295,034.61	3,579	7,020	2	2
Bay of Plenty	\$2,639,049.50	7,284	14,430	2	2
East Coast	\$1,545,730.80	4,293	8,817	2	2
Central	\$1,352,083.77	3,741	7,176	2	2
Wellington	\$1,525,120.14	4,212	8,166	2	2
Nelson	\$734,038.37	2,076	3,822	2	2
Canterbury	\$2,063,133.32	5,760	10,572	2	2
Southern	\$1,281,641.23	3,606	6,681	2	2
Other	\$43,620.52	123	207	2	1
Total	\$24,127,244.52	66,753	132,111	2	2

Notes:

- These are working age clients. Working age are clients aged 18 to 64 years old.
- "Work and Income Region" is based on the MSD Service Centre responsible for the client's case management.
- A client may not necessarily reside in the same area as their service centre.
- The 'Other' region includes clients managed from non-regional service centres such as the Centralised Unit Housing service centre, Studylink Processing Centre, National Office and NZ Super service centres.
- To protect confidentiality the Ministry of Social Development uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data.
- These data tables have had random rounding to base three applied to all cell counts in the table.
- The impact of applying random rounding is that columns and rows may not add exactly to the given column or row totals.
- The published counts will never differ by more than two counts.

The Accommodation Supplement (AS) is a non-taxable benefit which provides financial assistance towards accommodation costs. It is available for people who rent, board or own their own home. A person does not have to be receiving a benefit to be assessed to qualify for Accommodation Supplement. It is calculated using a formula that considers geographical location, family size, accommodation costs, income, and accommodation type.

Regarding your request for the Ministry's annual budget and spend for AS, SPS and Childcare Assistance, please visit the following link:

www.budget.govt.nz/budget/2021/by/vote/socdev.htm.

The above link will direct you to the Estimates of the Appropriations for Social Development on the Budget 2021 website. You can find the breakdown of the Accommodation Assistance appropriation in the 'Components of the Appropriation' table printed on page 243 of the document (page 83 of the PDF file). The Estimated actual column of the Components of the Appropriation table shows our estimated spend for the 12 months to June 2021, made up of 8 months of actual data, and four months of forecasted data.

Furthermore, you can find financial information on Childcare Assistance and SPS on page 245 and page 261 (page 85 and page 101), respectively. I have attached these particular pages to the response for ease of access. For SPS recipients, there is an additional \$20 per week income exemption when they have to pay childcare costs while they are working. Entitlement to a Childcare Subsidy or OSCAR is assessed first, and if the total cost of childcare is not covered by the subsidy, the recipient can receive the additional income exemption.

On 21 May 2021, the Ministry contacted you in order to clarify the aspect of your request around how many interactions SPS recipients have with the Ministry. The Ministry did not receive a clarification from you for this aspect of the request.

Individuals that receive SPS assistance are able to contact the Ministry through a wide range of channels, such as through their case manager, the Ministry's contact centre or through their MyMSD app. The number of interactions SPS recipients have with the Ministry is not centrally recorded and Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files to retrieve this information. As such your request for this information is refused under section 18(f) of the Act.

With regards to your request for the average length of time for someone to apply and receive SPS; the Ministry has a target processing time of five working days from when they have received all information needed process an application to when a decision is made. Staff perform many tasks and duties throughout their day to ensure New Zealanders are receiving their full and correct entitlements. In some cases, the Ministry may require further information from the applicant, which can extend the application process while waiting on the information to be received.

The Ministry does not centrally report the average processing time for SPS applications. The length of time from receipt of application to the grant or decline can be derived from individual client files, and determining the average would require individual review of these files. Therefore this aspect of the request is refused under Section 18(f) of the Act as it would require substantial manual collation.

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.

If you are not satisfied with this response Sole Parent Support recipients, 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bridget Saunders', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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

3.2 - Non-Departmental Benefits or Related Expenses

Accommodation Assistance (M37) (A25)

Scope of Appropriation

This appropriation is limited to payments for accommodation costs, paid in accordance with criteria set out in, or in delegated legislation made under, the Social Security Act 2018.

Expenses

	2020/21		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	Final Budgeted \$000	Estimated Actual \$000	Budget \$000	Estimated \$000	Estimated \$000	Estimated \$000
Total Appropriation	2,397,198	2,337,198	2,497,515	2,398,213	2,377,798	2,386,459

Components of the Appropriation

	2020/21		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	Budgeted \$000	Estimated Actual \$000	Budget \$000	Estimated \$000	Estimated \$000	Estimated \$000
Accommodation Supplement	2,009,171	2,009,171	2,158,988	2,123,140	2,140,202	2,141,866
Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant	328,025	328,025	338,525	275,071	237,594	244,591
Special Transfer Allowance	2	2	2	2	2	2
Supplementary Estimates Add-on	60,000	-	-	-	-	-

What is Intended to be Achieved with this Appropriation

This appropriation is intended to achieve social outcomes by providing targeted financial support to help eligible people meet the costs of accommodation.

How Performance will be Assessed and End of Year Reporting Requirements

An exemption was granted under s.15D(2)(b)(ii) of the PFA, as additional performance information is unlikely to be informative because this appropriation is solely for payments of Accommodation Assistance under the Social Security Act 2018 or any legislation that replaces that Act. Performance information relating to the administration of the payment is provided under the Improved Employment and Social Outcomes Support MCA in Vote Social Development.

Conditions on Use of Appropriation

Reference	Conditions
Accommodation Supplement is paid under section 65 of the Social Security Act 2018	The Accommodation Supplement provides a 70% subsidy for housing costs that exceed 25% of the recipient's income (for renters or boarders) or 30% of the recipient's income (for homeowners), up to a set maximum amount. The level of assistance depends on the recipient's accommodation costs, benefit payment rate, where the recipient lives and on his or her family size. The Supplement is a non-taxable payment that is asset-tested. It is income-tested for New Zealand Superannuation and Veterans' Pension recipients and for non-beneficiaries.
Away from Home Allowance is paid under the Away from Home Allowance Welfare Programme pursuant to section 124(1)(d) of the Social Security Act 1964 saved by clause 21 of Schedule 1 of the Social Security Act 2018 as if it were a special assistance programme approved and established under section 101 of the Social Security Act 2018	The Away from Home Allowance provides assistance with accommodation costs for the caregivers of dependent 16-17 year olds who move away from home to undertake tertiary study or an approved employment related training course. The level of Allowance is based on the same formula as for Accommodation Supplement. The Allowance is a non-taxable payment.
Special Transfer Allowance is paid under the Special Transfer Allowance Programme 2000 pursuant to section 124(1)(d) of the Social Security Act 1964 saved by clause 21 of Schedule 1 of the Social Security Act 2018 as if it were a special assistance programme approved and established under section 101 of the Social Security Act 2018	The Special Transfer Allowance provides assistance with accommodation costs to recipients of the Special Transfer Allowance prior to November 2000 and to former Tenure Protection Allowance recipients who have had their present house sold to a private landlord by Housing New Zealand Corporation. Tenure Protection Allowance ceased to exist with the introduction of the Income Related Rental Subsidy in November 2000. This Allowance is a non-taxable payment.
Special Needs Grant for Emergency Housing is paid under the Special Needs Grants Programme under section 124(1)(d) of the Social Security Act 1964 saved by clause 21 of Schedule 1 of the Social Security Act 2018 as if it were a special assistance programme approved and established under section 101 of the Social Security Act 2018	A grant may be made to a person with an immediate emergency housing need to purchase emergency housing (including any security deposit) for up to 21 nights. The person may be required to pay a contribution to the costs of their emergency housing.

Childcare Assistance (M63) (A25)

Scope of Appropriation

This appropriation is limited to assistance for the costs of childcare that meets specific quality guidelines, where parents meet activity and income criteria set out in, or in delegated legislation made under, the Social Security Act 2018.

Expenses

	2020/21		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	Final Budgeted \$000	Estimated Actual \$000	Budget \$000	Estimated \$000	Estimated \$000	Estimated \$000
Total Appropriation	169,161	150,961	162,872	168,632	168,433	173,830

What is Intended to be Achieved with this Appropriation

This appropriation is intended to achieve employment and social outcomes by providing financial support to assist caregivers and parents with childcare costs.

Sole Parent Support (M63) (A25)

Scope of Appropriation

This appropriation is limited to means-tested income support for people who are eligible for Sole Parent Support, paid in accordance with criteria set out in, or in delegated legislation made under, the Social Security Act 2018.

Expenses

	2020/21		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	Final Budgeted \$000	Estimated Actual \$000	Budget \$000	Estimated \$000	Estimated \$000	Estimated \$000
Total Appropriation	1,487,972	1,470,172	1,719,888	1,878,097	1,887,759	1,867,591

What is Intended to be Achieved with this Appropriation

This appropriation is intended to achieve employment and social outcomes by providing means-tested income support to sole parents while they are caring for dependent children.

How Performance will be Assessed and End of Year Reporting Requirements

An exemption was granted under s15D(2)(b)(ii) of the PFA, as additional performance information is unlikely to be informative because this appropriation is solely for payments of Sole Parent Support under the Social Security Act 2018. Performance information relating to the administration of the payments is provided under the Improved Employment and Social Outcomes Support MCA.

Current and Past Policy Initiatives

Policy Initiative	Year of First Impact	2020/21 Final Budgeted \$000	2021/22 Budget \$000	2022/23 Estimated \$000	2023/24 Estimated \$000	2024/25 Estimated \$000
Improving the Subsequent Work Capacity Medical Certificate Process for Jobseeker Support Health Condition and Disability	2021/22	-	8	3	3	3
Main Benefit Increase and Other Changes - 1 April 2022	2021/22	-	17,740	72,624	72,822	72,927
Main Benefit Increase and Other changes - 1 July 2021	2021/22	-	93,135	99,846	100,169	100,308
Reinstating the Training Incentive Allowance for Levels 4 to 7 on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework	2021/22	-	6,453	18,030	31,852	18,107
Welfare Overhaul: Removing the Subsequent Child Policy	2021/22	-	26,297	101,047	104,695	104,695
Benefits for Recent Migrants - Continuing Current Residency Requirements	2020/21	84	172	175	179	179
Extending Temporary Deferral Measures to Manage Demand	2020/21	13,647	4,136	-	-	-
Implementing the Agreed Approach to Paying Benefits and Pensions to those Stranded Overseas	2020/21	(344)	-	-	-	-