



09 MAR 2021

On 19 February 2021, your request for the following information, under the Official Information Act 1982, was transferred in full to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) from the New Zealand Police:

- *Has anyone been prosecuted for COVID-19 subsidy fraud?*

The Wage Subsidy has enabled rapid support for thousands of New Zealand businesses during this time of uncertainty and has ensured that employees are able to remain connected with their employers during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The Government has previously made it clear that the Wage Subsidy scheme was set up on a high-trust model, in order to deliver funds to support workers, families and businesses.

As part of the application, businesses were required to sign a declaration that they had met the scheme's eligibility criteria. The declarations are extensive and include agreement that details in the application may be verified with other agencies, obligations in terms of use of the subsidy, and consequences of non-compliance.

The Wage Subsidy was modified on 27 March 2020 to ensure employers are passing on the full subsidies to workers. As a result, the Employment Declaration changed.

The Wage Subsidy declarations can be found on the Ministry's website at the following links:

- www.workandincome.govt.nz/online-services/covid-19/declaration-wage-subsidy.html (for the original Wage Subsidy on or after 4pm 27 March 2020).
- www.workandincome.govt.nz/online-services/covid-19/wage-subsidy-declaration.html (for the original Wage Subsidy before 4pm 27 March 2020).
- www.workandincome.govt.nz/online-services/covid-19/declaration-wage-subsidy-extension.html.
- www.workandincome.govt.nz/online-services/covid-19/declaration-resurgence-wage-subsidy.html.

Where there is evidence of deliberate fraud, the Ministry will consider criminal prosecution. However, decisions about prosecutions are made only after a thorough investigation process. No decisions to prosecute any individual for COVID-19 Wage Subsidy fraud have been made to date.

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 and any attached documents 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 regarding the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy, 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.

Ngā mihi nui



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