



17 MAY 2021

Dear

On 30 March 2021, you emailed the Office of the Prime Minister (PMO) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information in relation to a press conference on 29 March 2021, where the Minister commented on the "reduction of around 1,700 people on benefit":

- *how this figure was calculated? Who calculated it? What data set you were referring to? And who owns the data?*
- *how many new beneficiaries were added during the same period?*
- *what percentage left against the total number of beneficiaries at that point in time?*

On 19 April 2021, PMO transferred your request, under section 14(b)(ii), to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) to respond, as the information you have requested is better suited to be answered by the Ministry.

For the sake of clarity, I will respond to each of your questions in turn:

- *how this figure was calculated? Who calculated it? What data set you were referring to? And who owns the data?*

On 29 March 2021, Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development and Employment (the Minister) provided the following response, in press conference, when asked about an increasing number of people heading to welfare benefits:

"We've actually seen a decline since mid-January, I think, and even in the last week we've seen another reduction of around 1,700 people on benefit. So that is heartening, but, of course, we know how uncertain the times are, given COVID, and so we just need to continue to watch that space and keep doing what we've been doing, which is investing and upskilling in training opportunities for people who fall out of work, as well. "

The figure the Minister refers to is sourced from the Income Support Weekly Update dated 19 March 2021. The update shows a decrease in Working Age Main Benefit recipients from 370,941 to 369,231 (1,710) between the period 12 March and 19 March 2021. This figure represents the net difference in recipient numbers, taking into account benefit exits and grants during this period.

This report is owned by the Ministry of Social Development and is publicly available on the Ministry website at the following link: www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/weekly-reporting/2021/mar/income-support-weekly-update-19-march-2021.pdf.

Additional weekly reporting publications can be found here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/weekly-reporting/.

- *how many new beneficiaries were added during the same period?*
- *what percentage left against the total number of beneficiaries at that point in time?*

In response to questions two and three of your request, this information is also available online at the following link: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/weekly-reporting/.

More in-depth data on Main Benefit grants and cancellations for the period 12 March 2021 to 19 March 2021 can be found in the supporting data file linked within the above Income Support Weekly Update.

As such, this part of your request is refused under 18(d) of the Act on the basis that the information requested is publicly available.

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 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 beneficiaries, 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 flourish extending to the right.

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