

Tēnā koe

On 25 August 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Who are the non-government agencies that might obtain [your staff's] private information?*

The Wage Subsidy Scheme 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 scheme has been set up on a high-trust model in order to quickly deliver funds to support workers, families and businesses.

As part of the application process, businesses are required to sign a declaration that they meet the scheme's eligibility criteria. The declaration is extensive and includes consent for the Ministry to share information about the application with other agencies, including non-government agencies. This enables the Ministry to verify information provided by applicants to maintain the integrity of the Scheme. For example, information is validated with Inland Revenue before payment is made, and evidence supporting the required revenue decline being met may require expert analysis as part of post-payment reviews and investigations.

The Ministry has carried out an extensive range of work in order to identify and investigate possible wage subsidy fraud or incorrect payments. These measures have included targeted payment reviews and investigations and follow-up action on complaints.

The Ministry has engaged Deloitte to assist with forensic accounting services, and Meredith Connell to assist with legal advice, as part of the Ministry's investigative processes for wage subsidy. We engage professional services such as these to assist us with the implementation of the Wage Subsidy Scheme.

To date, the Ministry has not provided employee information to other non-government agencies.

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 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 non-government agencies that might obtain their private information, 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

George Van Ooyen
Group General Manager
Client Service Support