



20 December 2022

Tēnā koe

On 25 November 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- 1. In the last year, how many people in Wairarapa have applied for MSD grants for dental care? How many of these were approved?*
- 2. In the last year, how many dental appointments in Wairarapa has MSD paid for?*
- 3. Year-on year from 2017, has MSD seen an increase in applications for dental treatment grants in Wairarapa?*
- 4. Can you break down grants by type of surgery required in Wairarapa?*
- 5. What was the median value of grants applied for in Wairarapa?*

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 if they meet an 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.

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.

The maximum amount payable to a person applying for a non-recoverable Special Needs Grant (SNG) towards the cost of dental is \$1,000 within any 52-week period, as at 1 December 2022. 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 Grants, they may qualify for an Advance Payment of Benefit to meet any or all remaining costs.

Further information on dental treatment assistance can be found here: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/health-and-disability/dental-treatment.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/health-and-disability/dental-treatment.html)

For the sake of clarity, I will respond to your questions in the following order.

- 1. In the last year, how many people in Wairarapa have applied for MSD grants for dental care? How many of these were approved?*
- 3. Year-on year from 2017, has MSD seen an increase in applications for dental treatment grants in Wairarapa?*

You will find **Table One** in the **Appendix** which outlines applications for dental assistance in Wairarapa, consisting of number of grants and declines from 2017 to 2021. As you will note, this number has decreased in the last 5 years.

- 5. What was the median value of grants applied for in Wairarapa?*

**Table Two** in the **Appendix** outlines the total and median amounts of approved grants for dental assistance in Wairarapa from 2017 to 2021.

Prior to 1 December 2022, the maximum amount payable for SNGs towards the cost of dental treatment was \$300. This is reflected in the median amount approved.

- 2. In the last year, how many dental appointments in Wairarapa has MSD paid for?*
- 4. Can you break down grants by type of surgery required in Wairarapa?*

I am unable to provide you with this information as it is held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review a substantial number of files. As such, I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

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 and attachments on the Ministry'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, 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.

Ngā mihi nui

*Bridget Saunders*

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**Manager Issue Resolution  
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