



10 February 2022

Tēnā koe

On 22 December 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- 1. Statistically how many of the same clients receive food grants every week?*
- 2. How much of that particular populated ethnicity (that apply for food grants every week) is associated with a particular ethnicity region in New Zealand?*
- 3. Is there is a subset of population who is receiving food grants every week, if so how long has that arrangement been going on?*
- 4. How many years have these statistics been available to the New Zealand government?*
- 5. Is there a behaviour or psychologist who looks at the emotional correlation between the human body and how this type of conversation work eg: how much psychologist consequence has been researched by people who can provide an understanding on an emotional toll on the human body? Note: this question is in regards to the question being asked what has left the student short this week to buy food this week and the emotional strain of having to repeat themselves of their situation (student suggested perhaps there could be an automated process for the green payment card).*
- 6. Lastly what is the food grant allowance per person annually?*

On 23 December 2021 and 21 January 2022, the Ministry contacted you to clarify your request. To date no response has been received.

The Ministry is therefore interpreting your request as the following:

For Question One, please note that as a client can receive more than one grant, the Ministry is able to provide you with the number of Special Needs Grants (SNGs) granted for food over the last year, broken down by week ending.

For Question Two, the Ministry has interpreted your request as the number of food related SNGs processed by Territorial Local Authority and ethnicity.

A Special Needs Grant is a one-off payment to help with an essential or emergency cost if clients can't pay it another way. Food is one of the essential costs we help people with when they are experiencing hardship.

- www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/special-needs-grant.html.
- www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/urgent-costs/food.html.

For the sake of clarity, I will address each question in turn.

1. *Statistically how many of the same clients receive food grants every week?*

Please see **Table One**, within the attached Excel spreadsheet, which outlines the number of clients who received more than one Food Grant in the week for the period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021, by week ending.

2. *How much of that particular populated ethnicity (that apply for food grants every week) is associated with a particular ethnicity region in New Zealand?*

Please see **Table Two**, within the attached Excel spreadsheet, which outlines the number of clients who received Food Grants in the period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021, by total response ethnicity and number of grants.

Furthermore, see **Table Three**, within the attached Excel spreadsheet, which outlines the number of clients who received Food Grants in the period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021, by Territorial Local Authorities (TLA) and number of grants.

3. *Is there is a subset of population who is receiving food grants every week, if so how long has that arrangement been going on?*

The Ministry is unable to provide you with further population breakdown of the food grant numbers provided in Table One and Table Two, 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 thousands 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.

4. *How many years have these statistics been available to the New Zealand government?*

The Ministry has been recording Food Grant information since 1996.

5. *Is there a behaviour or psychologist who looks at the emotional correlation between the human body and how this type of conversation work eg: how much psychologist consequence has been researched by people who can provide an understanding on an emotional toll on the human body? Note: this question is in regards to the question being asked what has left the student short this week to buy food this week and the emotional strain of having to repeat themselves of their situation (student suggested perhaps there could be an automated process for the green payment card).*

The Ministry has not undertaken any research looking at the emotional strain experienced by those who frequently apply for hardship assistance. The Ministry is also unaware of any work that has been done by others in this area. Therefore, this information is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this information does not exist.

However, the Ministry acknowledges that requesting hardship assistance can for some add emotional strain and stress. The Ministry has worked to improve the accessibility of assistance, including SNGs for food being granted by our Contact Centre or through our online service, MyMSD. People no longer need to wait at a service centre for this emergency assistance.

6. *Lastly what is the food grant allowance per person annually?*

More than one food grant may be made in a 26-week period but unless exceptional circumstances exist, grants during a 26-week period must not exceed in total:

- single person with no dependent children, \$200.00
- married, civil union or de facto couple with no dependent children, \$300.00
- married, civil union or de facto couple, or sole parent with 1 or 2 dependent children, \$450.00
- married, civil union or de facto couple, or sole parent with 3 or more dependent, \$550.00

This information can also be found here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/maximum-payment-for-food-01.html.

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.

If you are not satisfied with this response, regarding Food Grants, 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

Bridget Saunders

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